

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF KEMALIST AUTOCRACY AND ITS REFORM POLICIES IN
TURKEY

by

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B.A., University of Ankara, 2001

M.A., University of Ankara, 2004

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Abstract

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, who was a nationalist leader and founder and first president of the republic of Turkey, still remains an important figure in the Turkish political and social landscape. Kemalist historiography, which is based on Mustafa Kemal's six-day speech (Nutuk) in October 1927, emphasizes the foundation of the Republic as central to Turkish history. While this historiography emphasizes that Mustafa Kemal had an explicit plan during his modernization efforts, this dissertation will cover how Mustafa Kemal was incoherent in his actions and changed his discourses over and over again during the change of the political structure of Turkey. Beyond that, this study will suggest that Mustafa Kemal was an opportunist and pragmatist who utilized every single event to establish a Jacobin style autocracy. This research will discuss how Mustafa Kemal succeeded in using every opportunity, such as the Law of Supreme Commander Act in August 1921, the abolition of Sultanate in 1922, the establishment of Republic in 1923, the abolition of Caliphate in 1924, and the elimination of opposition in 1925, to establish his personal autocracy. In particular, the records of Assembly debates, not sufficiently used by Turkish historians, will be helpful to understand the creation of this personal autocracy.

While Kemalist historiography credits Mustafa Kemal Atatürk with the original and unique conception of the social, legal, and educational reforms of the early Republican period, this dissertation argues that this approach is not balanced. Although the Kemalist historiography asserts that Mustafa Kemal and his legacy represent carrying out Enlightenment ideals in an obsolete society almost totally ignorant of these principles, the Kemalist modernization got a great inheritance from its predecessors, the Young Turks. Therefore, the Kemalist overstatement of an idealist figure of Mustafa Kemal is wrong in some degree. This dissertation aims to scrutinize the contribution of the Ottoman reformers and contradictions, mistakes, and overstatements of the

Kemalist modernization project in social, legal, and educational areas by the help of wide primary sources which include official reports of the Grand National Assembly, the Republican Era archives and a mass of periodicals which were published in 1920s in Turkey.

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Last but not least, my gratitude is to God for everything.

Dedication

For my wife Mucella

Chapter 1 - Introduction: The Establishment of Kemalist Autocracy and Its Reform Policies in Turkey

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of modern Turkish Republic and its first president from 1923 to 1938, was a strong nationalist leader who was successful in creating a nation-state after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. He was born in Salonica in 1881, when the Ottoman Empire was in a time of great social and political turmoil. While he was raised in a Muslim Turkish-speaking household, his birthplace was a diverse community, in where Jews and Greeks formed the largest communities. Therefore, he was raised in a place in where ethnic, religious, and cultural struggles helped to shape his political and intellectual perspective.¹

Mustafa Kemal was one of the greatest figures of Turkish history who has affected later generations deeply. The struggle against the ancient regime of the Ottoman dynasty and its historical, religious, and socio-economic structure under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal is called as the Kemalist movement. Because of his role as founder of the nation, Mustafa Kemal has acquired high status in Turkish society. His leadership and policies were unquestioned in the country long after his death in 1938. An entire historiography praises his achievements. For much of the twentieth century, this historiography played a public and political role. It was taught in schools and became a source of national pride/identity. Open criticism of Kemalist principles were taboo well into the 1980s, fifty years after Mustafa Kemal's death.

¹ Andrew Mango, *Ataturk: The Biography of the founder of Modern Turkey*, (London: Penguin, 2002), 8-10.

The famous 1927 Speech (Nutuk), which was delivered by Mustafa Kemal from 15 to 20 October 1927, at the second congress of his Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi), laid the foundation stone for the official historiography of the Turkish Republic. This speech has been an important source for the study of Kemalism. The Speech covered the events from the start of Mustafa Kemal's personal involvement in the Turkish War of Independence (19 May 1919) to the founding of the Turkish Republic in 1923. In the Speech, Mustafa Kemal narrated his own historiography of the War of Independence. He talked of his cause, the conditions of the national struggle, and the difficulties he faced; thus, he left a written document in his own words. The speech discredited not only the sultan and the henchmen of the old regime, who had sabotaged the national struggle, in Istanbul, but also Mustafa Kemal's former colleagues, who actually fought in the War of Independence.² From this perspective, Mustafa Kemal revealed the inner struggle of the nationalist leadership with this speech and made an apologia for his actions during this struggle.

When Mustafa Kemal addressed his speech to the members of RPP in October 1927, the Kemalist press glorified his work and speech which would be later the basis of Kemalist historiography. In particular, Yakup Kadri and Necmeddin Sadak, underlined the importance of Mustafa Kemal's action during the National Struggle. Both of these Kemalist authors described Mustafa Kemal as "making his own history" after achieving his goals.³ In the late 1920s, Kemalist orthodoxy emphasized the importance of Speech in the introduction part of its English translation in 1929 as: "Unconventional as the length and character of this speech is, the subject of it, which is a comprehensive account of one of the most remarkable events in the many centuries of Turkish

² Birol Baskan, *From Religious Empires to Secular States: State Secularization in Turkey, Iran, and Russia*, (London: Routledge, 2014), 57.

³ Yakup Kadri [Karaosmanoglu], "Yapti ve Yazdi" [He did and made it], *Milliyet*, 16 Oct. 1927, 1-2. Necmeddin Sadik [Sadak], "Tarihi Yapan da odur, Yazan da" [He was that one who made History], *Aksam*, 16 Oct. 1927, 1.

history, is equally unique. It reveals the activity of the speaker from the time when he first felt himself called upon to take the leadership of his nation into his own hands and guide it from shame and threatened ruin to freedom and power. Mustapha Kemal Pasha is moved to show his people how this new Turkey has been built up, on what foundations she is standing and what are the paths she must tread in future.”⁴

The Speech has being considered as one of the main source of the modern Turkish history by Kemalist orthodoxy until today. Writing in the 1970s, Cavit Orhan Tutengil described the Speech as the foundation of a national and modern state. Besides, the Speech was evaluated as an historical document which covered not only the interval of 1919 and 1927 by Tutengil. According to him, the Speech would shape the future of state because of its universal ideas.⁵ Sami Ozerdim evaluated the Speech as one of the most important socio-political work beside its narration of the War of Independence. Ozerdim emphasized that the Speech was a summary of the conflict between modernizers and reactionaries. Mustafa Kemal conveyed his thought that catching the modern states would be possible under the guidance of reason and science to the next generations via the Speech.⁶ Emre Kongar described the Speech as the product of a highly intelligent person who was righteous in his actions during the War of Independence. Mustafa Kemal aimed to explain some historical events which were happened during the war. Besides, he wanted to warn the next

⁴ Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, *A Speech Delivered by Ghazi Mustapha Kemal: President of the Turkish Republic. October 1927*, (Leipzig: K.F. Kochler, 1929), 1.

⁵ Cavit Orhan Tutengil, “Soylev’in Ogretisi” [The Doctrine of the Speech], *Türk Dili* 314, 1977, 367-368.

⁶ N. Sami Ozerdim, “Nutuk’ta Dizin Sorunu,” [The Index Problem in the Speech], *Türk Dili* 314, 1977, 510.

generations to be watchful for some of important subjects in the Speech.⁷ More recently, Baran Dural asserted that the Speech was still coherent and well written document.⁸

Kemalism became the core of the modern Turkish Republic in the 1930s. The term of Kemalism, as an ideology, was coined by Ahmet Cevat, a Turkish linguist, translator, and writer, in 1930. In his article, “*about the Great Turkish Revolution*,” Ahmet Cevat described Mustafa Kemal as “the Great Guide,” and he explained the content of Kemalism.⁹ In December 1930, Ali Naci Karacan, another influential journalist, stated that “there should be Kemalism in Turkey as an ideology like communism in Soviet Union and fascism in Italy,” in his newspaper *Inkilap (Revolution)*.¹⁰ While Mustafa Kemal and his friends were not initially interested in the name and concept of Kemalism, but the perception was changed in mid-1930s. At the Fourth Congress of Republican People’s Party (RPP) in May 1935, the name of Kemalism was accepted as the regime’s political way.¹¹ After this congress, the concept of Kemalism became popular among the Turkish scholars who aimed to explain the notion of Kemalism.¹² Seref Aykut, a pro-Kemalist deputy and historian, explained the political program of RPP in his book *Kemalism* in 1936. He underlined that it was impossible to explain the Turkish revolution with the ideologies of Marxist

⁷ Emre Kongar, “Soylev Hangi Kosullar Altinda Soylendi,” [Had the Speech Addressed under which Circumstances?], *Türk Dili* 314, 1977, 374.

⁸ A. Baran Dural, *His Story: Mustafa Kemal and Turkish Revolution*, (Bloomington, IN: iUniverse, 2007), 131.

⁹ Ahmet Cevat, “*Buyuk Turk Inkilabina Dair*” [About the Great Turkish Revolution], *Muhit*, Jul. 1930, 152.

¹⁰ Nedim Yalansiz, “1930lar Turkiyesi’nde Demokrasi ve Kemalizm Tartismalari” [Discussions about Democracy and Kemalism in the 1930s in Turkey], *Cagdas Turkiye Tarihi Arastirmalari Dergisi* 3, no: 8, 25-42, 34.

¹¹ Dogu Perincek, *Kemalist Devrim-5: Kemalizm’in Felsefesi ve Kaynaklari* [Kemalist Revolution-5: The Philosophy and Sources of Kemalism], (Istanbul: Kaynak Yayinlari, 2006), 10-13.

¹² Hakan Uzun, “Tek Parti Doneminde Yapilan Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi Kongreleri Temelinde Degismez Genel Baskanlik, Kemalizm ve Milli Sef Kavramlari” [the Fixed General Presidency, Kemalism, and National Chief Concepts on the Basis of Conventions Held by Republican People’s Party in the Single-Party Period], *Cagdas Turkiye Tarihi Arastirmalari Dergisi* 9, no:20-21, 233-271, 245.

and Fascist regimes. Above all of these regimes, Aykut pointed out that Kemalism was a religion of living and a kind of religion which was based on economic basis. Besides, one of the main character of this religion was its revolutionary structure.¹³

In the late 1930s, another book shaped the Kemalist orthodoxy. Moiz Cohen, who was born to a Jewish family in Salonica in 1883 and changed later his name to Munis Tekinalp, was another Kemalist ideologue presented the principles of Kemalism in his book *Kemalism* which published in Istanbul in 1936. Tekinalp described the Turkish revolution as a changing step from being an eastern society to a western society. Mustafa Kemal ordered to create a new state, a new homeland, and a new type of Turk after the abolition of Sultanate and Caliphate. Besides, Tekinalp underlined that Mustafa Kemal was aware of his main enemy on his modernization efforts. This great enemy was theocracy which became an obstacle for Turkish people to westernize the state.¹⁴ In the same decade, M. Saffet Engin was also interpreted the philosophical and historical grounds of Kemalist principles in his book in 1938. According to Engin, Kemalism was a result of a national salvation and rising which had never seen in the history of mankind. Engin indicated that the Kemalist revolution destroyed Islamic sharia and replaced it with the sense of community. This sense of community emerged from the nation's high character. Like the other authors of Kemalism, Saffet Engin also praised Mustafa Kemal as an infallible leader whose statements and actions were right and well-timed.¹⁵

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk has portrayed as a charismatic leader who has elevated to a position of cult symbol by the Kemalist orthodoxy. All efforts of modernization has attributed to the

¹³ M. Seref Aykut, *Kemalizm [Kemalism]*, (Istanbul: Muallim Ahmet Halit Kitap Evi, 1936), 15.

¹⁴ Munis Tekinalp, *Kemalizm [Kemalism]*, (Istanbul: Cumhuriyet Matbaası, 1936), 296- 297.

¹⁵ M. Saffet Engin, *Kemalizm Inkılabının Prensipleri [The Principles of Kemalist Revolution]*, (Istanbul: Cumhuriyet Matbaası, 1938), 81-84.

vigorous energy of Atatürk. Aykut Kansu described the main attitude of this Kemalist historiography as: “Mustafa Kemal’s political vision and will is brought to the forefront of historical discussion which leads, almost invariably, to personality worshipping. In this version of hero-worshipping, Turkey owes its existence to his leadership alone.”¹⁶ As mentioned above, this orthodoxy started in the late 1930s by the first group of Kemalist ideologues, like Engin, Tekinalp, and Aykut. In the 1960s, Lord Kinross continued this tradition. He underlined the superiority of Mustafa Kemal among his compeers as: “All were patriots, practical soldiers, men of common sense and intelligence. But among them only Kemal had the necessary overall grasp both of internal and external affairs, that peculiar compound of intuition and reason, resilience and energy, and above all willpower, required to carry such an enterprise to a successful conclusion.”¹⁷ In the 1980s, Dankwart Rustow also emphasized Mustafa Kemal’s charismatic leadership. He underlined that the successes of Mustafa Kemal went well together with the hypothesis of charismatic leadership.¹⁸ In the early 2000s, Metin Heper agreed the charismatic leadership theory. Heper indicated that Mustafa Kemal was aware of his charisma which affected people. He asserted that Mustafa Kemal used this charisma for realizing the modernization projects in his mind, instead of establishing a personal autocracy.¹⁹

The ideology’s basic principles, the Six Arrows of Kemalism, were republicanism, statism, populism, laicism, nationalism, and reformism. These six principles were enumerated in the

¹⁶ Aykut Kansu, *The Revolution of 1908 in Turkey*, (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 12.

¹⁷ Lord Kinross, *Atatürk: A Biography of Mustafa Kemal, Father of Modern Turkey*. New York, (NY: William Morrow and Company, 1965), 164.

¹⁸ Dankwart A. Rustow, “*Devlet Kurucusu Olarak Atatürk*” [*Atatürk as the Founder of State*], Yavuz Abadan’a Armagan (Ankara: Sevinc Matbaası, 1969), 588.

¹⁹ Metin Heper, *Türkiye’de Devlet Gelenegi* [*State Tradition in Turkey*], (Ankara: Dogu Bati Yayinlari, 2006), 115-116.

Republican People's Party Statutes of 1935, and they were incorporated in the constitution of 1937, which remained in effect until 1961, then only to be reformulated with slight modifications.²⁰ These principles formed the state ideology of Kemalism and the basis for indoctrination in schools, the media and the army.²¹ They represented a kind of Jacobinism, defined by Atatürk himself as a method of utilizing political despotism in order to break down the social despotism prevalent among the traditionally minded Turkish-Muslim population. Kemalism constituted the official ideology of the state, and endured publicly unchallenged until the 1980s.²² In particular, Turkish military served as a bastion of the Kemalist legacy from the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923, and actively promoted the nationalist and secularist ideals of Mustafa Kemal. Over time, the military intervened in national politics on multiple occasions by staging coups against opposition and failed governments. This occurred in 1960, 1971, and 1980. Besides, the military also promoted its Kemalist ideals by aiding in drafting the 1924, 1960, and 1982 constitutions. This intervention into politics and government policies stopped any kind of challenge to the regime.²³ Therefore, challenging to the Kemalist historiography became impossible until the mid-1980s.

Most historians have upheld an orthodox view of Kemalism and asserted the progressive side of Kemalism. Writing in the 1960s, Niyazi Berkes emphasized “the significant political, legal, cultural, social and economic changes that were implemented under the leadership of Mustafa

²⁰ Ergun Özbudun, *Otoriter Rejimler, Seçimsel Demokrasiler ve Türkiye* [Authoritarian Regimes, Selective Democracies and Turkey], (Istanbul: Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2011), 99.

²¹ Erik Jan Zürcher, *the Unionist Factor: The Role of the Committee of Union and Progress in the Turkish National Movement, 1905-1926*, (Leiden: Brill, 1984), 182.

²² Mete Tuncay, "Kemalism." In *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World*. Oxford Islamic Studies Online, <http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t236/e0440>

²³ Juliann Merryman, *Kemalism: A Revolutionary Ideology and its Islamist Opposition*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2013), 43.

Kemal Ataturk in the early years of the Turkish Republic. Ataturk and his Republican People's Party applied their western-inspired modernization to all areas of government. Central to the reforms was the belief that Turkish society would have to westernize itself both politically and culturally in order to modernize.”²⁴ Falih Rifki Atay, one of the closest allies of Mustafa Kemal in the early Republican period, described Kemalism positively. According to him, Kemalism was an ideology which aimed to participate Turkish nation in the civilized nations by realizing the freedom of conscience and reason.²⁵ Nadir Nadi Abalioglu, a Kemalist journalist and writer, described Kemalism as a political doctrine which was based on civilization, hard science, conscious nationalism, and individualism.²⁶ Tarik Zafer Tunaya described Kemalism as an ideology which emerged from Mustafa Kemal’s ideas and actions.²⁷ Besides these Turkish scholars, Bernard Lewis also underlined the positive side of Kemalism in the 1960s. He described the Kemalist revolution in his book *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* as “having brought new life and hope to the Turkish people, restored their energies and self-respect, and set them firmly on the road not only to independence, but to that rarer and more precious thing that is freedom.”²⁸

In the 1980s, the Kemalist orthodoxy became very strong in Turkish historiography. In particular, after the military coup d’état of 1980, the new military administration promoted the Kemalist values and principles within the state. This approach was seen in the academic circles also. Turkish historians stressed the positive sides of Kemalism exceedingly in the early 1980s.

²⁴ Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1964), 461-465.

²⁵ Falih Rifki Atay, *Ataturkculuk Nedir [What is Kemalism]*, (Istanbul: Ak Yayinlari, 1966), 45.

²⁶ Nadir Nadi Abalioglu, *Ataturk İlkeleri Isiginda Uyarilar: Bir Iflasin Kronolojisi 1950-1960 [Warnings in the Light of Kemalist Principles: Chronology of a Bankruptcy 1950-1960]*, (Istanbul: Cumhuriyet Yayinlari, 1961), 156.

²⁷ Tarik Zafer Tunaya, *Devrim Hareketleri Icinde Ataturk ve Ataturkculuk [Ataturk and Kemalism in the Revolution Actions]*, (Istanbul: Baha, 1964), 132.

²⁸ Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 293.

Hamza Eroglu emphasized that Kemalism emerged from the realities of Turkey. It contained the National Struggle in one hand and the radical changes on the other hand. Briefly, Kemalism was the ideological power of the Turkish revolution and it would be Turkey's future ideal.²⁹ Enver Ziya Karal asserted that the Turkish revolution was one of the greatest revolution in the world. It was an original revolution and the greatest one in the twentieth century. Kemalism emerged from this revolution. Kemalism was totally different than the other ideologies. The process of Turkish revolution was different than the others; while principles were determined first and then revolution came after these principles in other revolution, the situation was just the opposite in Turkish case. The Kemalist principles were determined after the Turkish revolution became successful.³⁰ Suna Kili indicated that the distinctive specialty of the Kemalist ideology was its national character. Besides, it was formed from the historical, cultural, and socio-economic conditions and structures of the Turkish society. Kemalism benefited from both Marxist and Western-style development models. Kemalism aimed to establish pluralist and liberal society which was based on reason and hard sciences.³¹

More recently, Erik Jan Zürcher again described the impact of Kemalism in terms of modernization and westernization: "Mustafa Kemal Atatürk led the Turkish nation out of the Ottoman Empire into the modern world, changing the entire system of government in Turkey. His philosophy on republicanism, secularism, nationalism, statism, and modernism, which today is called Kemalism, moved Turkey towards Western thought and away from a theocratic state."³²

²⁹ Hamza Eroglu, *Atatürkçülük El Kitabı [Handbook of Kemalism]*, (Ankara: Olgac Matbaası, 1981), 7.

³⁰ Enver Ziya Karal, *Atatürk ve Devrim [Atatürk and Revolution]*, (Ankara: TTK Basımevi, 1980), 148.

³¹ Suna Kili, *Atatürk Devrimi Bir Çağdaşlaşma Modeli [Kemalist Revolution: A model of Modernization]*, (Istanbul: Cumhuriyet Kitapları, 1981), 39-41.

³² Erik Jan Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 2004), 181.

Ahmet Mumcu praised Mustafa Kemal for applying Enlightenment ideals to an obsolete society which was almost totally ignorant to these principles.³³ Like others, Samuel P. Huntington indicated that Mustafa Kemal Atatürk had created a new Turkey out of the ruins of the Ottoman Empire and had launched a massive effort both to westernize it and to modernize it. Besides, Huntington pointed out that Kemalism involved the difficult and traumatic task of destroying the Islamic culture of Turkey that has existed for centuries and putting in its place a totally new culture imported from another civilization.³⁴

Kemalist orthodoxy has depicted Kemalism as a successful, westernizing, and modernizing ideology in part out of a basic agreement with its rightness in the Turkish context. Besides, this orthodoxy has interpreted the principle of republicanism in the Six Arrows as Kemalism aimed democracy. In the late 1920s, Kemalists stood against dynastic control and theological forms of governance and they believed that a republic was the most modern form of state government. In the introduction part of Mustafa Kemal's Speech, in its English translation, modern Turkish state described as "the present Turkish State under its new Constitution is an extremely democratic republic, which emphatically declines to be influenced by religious considerations. As an easily to be understood, and we may even say inevitable counter-blast to the close connection existing for many centuries between the most absolute monarchy and a religion permeating every sphere of private and public life, the freedom of the citizen and the complete separation of State from Religion have become the battle-cry of the present day."³⁵

³³ Ahmet Mumcu, *Atatürkçülükte Temel İlkeler [The Fundamental Principles in Atatürkism]*, 4th ed., (Istanbul: Inkilap Yayınevi, 2000), 67.

³⁴ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2007), 74.

³⁵ Atatürk, *Speech*, 1.

In the early 1960s, Niyazi Berkes described the goal of Kemalist ideology as seeking to create a modern, democratic and secular nation-state, guided by educational and scientific progress based on the principles of Positivism, Rationalism and the Enlightenment.³⁶ Like his Turkish counterparts, Bernard Lewis emphasized also the democratic mentality of Mustafa Kemal in his most well-known book *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*. Lewis underlined that Mustafa Kemal showed respect for decency and legality, for human and political standards. He asserted that Mustafa Kemal was not a revolutionary junior officer seizing power by coup d'état, but a general and pasha, taking control by gradual, almost reluctant steps in a moment of profound national crisis. Besides, he described Kemalism as different from Bolshevism and fascism, but in terms of liberalism and democracy.³⁷ Lord Kinross, another influential author in modern Turkish history, emphasized the democratic mentality of the Mustafa Kemal. Kinross saw Mustafa Kemal as a realist, who thought not in terms of gestures, but of actions, who infused Turkish people with a belief in the values of Western democracy.³⁸

In the 1980s, Ahmet Mumcu stressed that the popular sovereignty which became a reality after the establishment of Grand National Assembly in 1920 was a sign of Kemalist revolution and democracy in his book *Ataturkculukte Temel İlkeler (The Fundamental Principles in Ataturkism)* which was published in 1988. Besides, Mumcu differentiated the Kemalist modernization from the Ottoman reforms that Mustafa Kemal destroyed entire obsolete thoughts from society and put the new principles. Therefore, Kemalist movement was a revolutionary movement and is different than the Ottoman reformatations.³⁹ Vakur Versan described Kemalism as a democratic and non-

³⁶ Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, 481-490.

³⁷ Lewis, *The Emergence*, 290-291.

³⁸ Kinross, *Ataturk*, 504.

³⁹ Mumcu, *Ataturkculukte Temel İlkeler*, 66-67.

dogmatic ideology of national modernization. He believed that Kemalism could provide a good model for the political, economic, and cultural modernization of developing countries.⁴⁰ Writing in the 1990s, Toktamis Ates described the change of the monarchical authority to a popular sovereignty as a revolution and aimed to establish democracy in his book “*Biz Devrimi Cok Seviyoruz*.”⁴¹ Like these Turkish scholars, Andrew Mango also shared the same idea as Kemalism aimed to establish a democracy in Turkey. Mango described Mustafa Kemal as democrat in theory who left behind him the structure of democracy, not of dictatorship. Besides, Mango emphasized Mustafa Kemal’s vision as humanist and universalist.⁴²

Kemalism was accepted as a revolutionary movement widely by Kemalist orthodoxy. In 1930s, Kemalism was identified as an “ideology of revolution” in school textbooks. The first Kemalist attempt in these school textbooks was the four-volume set of history textbooks, which were written by the Turk Tarihi Tetkik Cemiyeti (Turkish History Research Society) and designed for use at the high school level were the model of, and provided resource material for, school history textbooks at every level after its publication in 1931. The fourth volume of this history textbook “*Tarih IV*,” which was an ideological textbook taught by Kemalist educators in high schools, summarized Kemalism as “the most perfect political system among the others in all over the world.”⁴³ This book, which was devoted to the history of Republic, contained the basic elements of the Kemalist interpretation. It described that in the history of humankind, only Turks

⁴⁰ Vakur Versan, “The Kemalist Reform of Turkish Law and Its Impact,” in *Ataturk and the Modernization of Turkey*, ed. Jacob M. Landau, (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1984), 247.

⁴¹ Toktamis Ates, *Biz Devrimi Cok Seviyoruz [We Love Revolution so much]*, (Istanbul: Der Yayınevi, 1996), 60.

⁴² Mango, *Ataturk*, 536.

⁴³ *Tarih IV, Kemalist Egitimin Tarih Dersleri (1931-1941) [History IV, History Textbooks of the Kemalist Education]*, (Istanbul: Kaynak Yayınları, 2001), 188.

managed to establish many states and the establishment of the Republic of Turkey was the most modern one.⁴⁴

Like *Tarih IV*, other history textbooks were seen as introducing the theme of civilization to the students by the Republican elite. For example, the textbook which was published by the Ministry of Culture in 1936 for the fourth grade students emphasized the importance of civilization as: “It is this sort of progress that creates civilization. Nations who walk on the path of progress become more civilized. However, one must know that there is no end to this path of civilization and progress. A nation cannot say this much progress and civilization is enough for me. Because the continued advancement of other peoples and nations means the one nation is staying behind, becoming weak and not being able to protect possessions it has against its enemies. A nation’s not remaining behind becomes possible by the individuals separately coming forward in all competition. Then we can comprehend what kind of preparation is needed for Turkish children so that the Turkish nation will always remain ahead.”⁴⁵ In another example, Ali Resat stressed that the Republic embraced Western civilization as a whole in his book *Tarih Dersleri, 5 (History for Fifth Grade)*.⁴⁶ All these history textbooks reflected the idea of Mustafa Kemal about the modernization and Westernization. Mustafa Kemal declared that “there may be a great many countries in the world, but there is only one civilization, and if a nation is to achieve progress, she must be a part of this one civilization.”⁴⁷ Thus, all of these history textbooks were written under the influence of Mustafa Kemal’s opinion about civilization and modernization.

⁴⁴ *Türk Tarihi Tetkik Cemiyeti, Tarih IV [Turkish History Research Society, History IV]*, (Istanbul: Devlet Matbaası, 1932). 1.

⁴⁵ *T. C. Kultur Bakanligi, Tarih, 4 [Ministry of Culture, History 4]*, (Istanbul: Devlet Basimevi, 1936). 81.

⁴⁶ Ali Resat, *Tarih Dersleri, 5 [History Courses, 5]*, (Istanbul: Turk Nesriyat Yurdu, 1931), 280

⁴⁷ Versan, “*The Kemalist Reform of Turkish Law and Its Impact*,” 247.

Some foreign scholars shared the same idea that Kemalism was a revolution in their works. As an example, Rom Landau described Kemalism as “a philosophy and a method of life” which had its own spiritual and material innovations which were products of Kemalist revolution in his book “*Search for Tomorrow*” which was published in 1938.⁴⁸ Niyazi Berkes continued this Kemalist tradition in the 1970s. He indicated that Kemalism was a revolution which was accomplished by a minor group of progressives under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal after defeating a major group of reactionaries.⁴⁹

Taboos of the Kemalist regime were barrier on the way of an objective view to Mustafa Kemal’s *Speech* and early Kemalist modernization until 1980s. Memoirs of the military leaders, such as Ali Fuat Cebesoy, Kazim Karabekir, and Ali Ihsan Sabis, who were Mustafa Kemal’s former colleagues actually fought in the War of Independence, were published in the late 1950s and early 1960s. These memoirs, which were different than the narrative in *the Speech*, created an alternative perspective to look at the War of Independence. However, the Kemalist orthodoxy has ignored most of these memoirs. Moreover, when Kazim Karabekir’s book “*Istiklal Harbimiz*” (*Our War of Independence*) was published in 1960, the Kemalist Government confiscated the book and banned it because of its critics to Mustafa Kemal.⁵⁰ The Law code 5816, which protected the legacy of Mustafa Kemal, was used for banning all these alternative approaches.

In the early 1980s, the Kemalist orthodoxy was challenged by both Turkish and foreign scholars. First, the main Kemalist sources were criticized as not looking at the big picture of the

⁴⁸ Rom Landau, *Search for Tomorrow*, (London: Nicholson & Watson, 1938), 243.

⁴⁹ Niyazi Berkes, *Türk Düşününde Batı Sorunu (The Western Question in Turkish Thought)*, (Ankara: Bilgi Yayinevi, 1975), 85.

⁵⁰ Bulent Tanor, *Türkiye’de Yerel Kongre İktidarları (1918-1920) [Local Congress Governments in Turkey (1918-1920)]*, (Istanbul: Afa Yayinlari, 1992), 107. Zürcher, *the Unionist Factor*, 53.

modern Turkish history by these revisionist scholars. As an example, Kemalist orthodoxy asserted that Mustafa Kemal started the National Struggle against the invaders and became the leader of the resistance movement. Bulent Tanor explained this approach as Kemalist orthodoxy created a myth around Mustafa Kemal that when the nation was slothful, Mustafa Kemal was so energetic to illuminate people to save their land.⁵¹ On contrary this approach, Zurcher pointed out in his book “*the Unionist Factor*,” the Committee of Union and Progress was very active during the War of Independence and the role of its members was very crucial, while the Kemalist orthodoxy ignored their effort during the war.⁵² Like Zurcher, Bulent Tanor mentioned about many different resistance movements and their congresses before Mustafa Kemal started his mission in May 1919 in Samsun in the early 1990s.⁵³ In his book “*Türkiye’de Siyasal Kültürün Resmî Kaynakları Atatürk’ün Nutuk’u*” (*The Official Sources of the Political Culture in Turkey, Atatürk’s Speech*), Taha Parla criticized Mustafa Kemal’s narration of the Turkish War of Independence in his Speech in 1927. He emphasized that Mustafa Kemal’s attitude in the war had some mistakes. Parla portrayed Mustafa Kemal as not paying attention other’s opinions and behaving as an infallible person during the war.⁵⁴ Therefore, he criticized a Speech-centered narration of early Republican period.

The Kemalist orthodoxy’s claim that Kemalism aimed to establish a democratic state was questioned by the revisionist approach after the late 1980s. Nilufer Gole underlined the misconception of Kemalist orthodoxy as showing the Kemalist anti-religious attitude as

⁵¹ Tanor, *Türkiye’de Yerel Kongre İktidarlari*, 105-106.

⁵² Zurcher, *the Unionist Factor*, 53.

⁵³ Tanor, *Türkiye’de Yerel Kongre İktidarlari*, 105-106.

⁵⁴ Taha Parla, *Türkiye’de Siyasal Kültürün Resmi Kaynakları Atatürk’ün Nutuk’u* [*The Official Sources of the Political Culture in Turkey, Atatürk’s Speech*], (Istanbul, İletişim Yayınları, 1991), 28.

democracy instead of its authoritarian secularism. Gole stressed that in this context Kemalism was neither pluralist nor accommodating, but militant secular.⁵⁵ More recently, Taha Parla was also against the concept of Kemalist democracy. Parla indicated the weak points of Kemalist assertion about its democratic character as: “in the tutelary democratic accounts of Kemalism, both the cult of the hero status sprung up around Kemal and the authoritarian measures taken by his regime are downplayed as having less to do with Kemal’s personal ambition or with Kemalism’s essential antidemocratic content than with the needs of people in a heavily traditional context. Kemalism’s early authoritarian elements were “tutelary” democratic- meaning, democratizing measures undertaken by a trustful and trustworthy guardian, a great leader prepared to set and capable of setting an extraordinary example in order to lay the foundation for democratic practice.”⁵⁶

The originality of social and legal reforms during the Kemalist modernization has been discussed for many years by both Turkish and foreign scholars. Kemalist orthodoxy has depicted Mustafa Kemal as an idealistic figure during his struggles over the political structure of Turkey and has overlooked continuities with the Young Turks for a long time. However, it is a fact that the Kemalist modernization got a great inheritance from its predecessors, the Young Turks, referring to the members of the Ottoman society who were progressive, modernist and opposed to the status quo. Therefore, the Kemalist overstatement of an idealist figure of Mustafa Kemal is wrong in some degree. In particular, the inheritance of Young Turks was clear in political, social, legal, and educational spheres during the Kemalist modernization.

⁵⁵ Nilufer Gole, *The Forbidden Modern: Civilization and Veiling*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 132.

⁵⁶ Taha Parla and Andrew Dawson, *Corporatist Ideology In Kemalist Turkey: Progress Or Order?*, (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2004), 4.

Kemalist orthodoxy stressed the Kemalist modernization attempts as “a brave and new experiment” in 1920s and 1930s, and they were not very familiar with the achievements of the late period of the Ottoman Empire.⁵⁷ In particular, this assertion was seen in the early books of Kemalist authors like Saffet Engin and Munis Tekinalp, and history textbooks, like *History IV*. Bernard Lewis continued the same tradition in the 1960s. He described the creation of the Republic of Turkey as: “one of the major revolutions of modern times, involving a radical and violent break with the social, cultural, and political traditions of the past.”⁵⁸ This orthodoxy has preferred to ignore the contribution of the Ottoman intellectuals to the reform movements for a long time. In the 1980s, main Kemalist sources differentiated the Kemalist modernization from the Ottoman reforms. As an example, Ahmet Mumcu emphasized that Mustafa Kemal destroyed all of the obsolete thoughts from society and put the new principles, therefore the revolutionary character of the Kemalist modernization was different than the Ottoman reforms.⁵⁹ Another Kemalist author, Ahmet Taner Kislali, also thought that Kemalist modernization was different than the Ottoman reforms in the 1990s. He stressed that, while the Ottoman reforms aimed only to save the state, on contrary, Mustafa Kemal aimed to create a modern state by the help of people’s support which had never seen in the past.⁶⁰

While the image of “a brave and new experiment” has persisted in the popular writings on Turkey in the early 1980s, in the academic writing this attitude has superseded by depicting the

⁵⁷ Elisabeth Ozdalga, *Late Ottoman Society: The Intellectual Legacy*, (London: Routledge, 2011), 13.

⁵⁸ Lewis, *The Emergence*, 1.

⁵⁹ Ahmet Mumcu, *Atatürkcülükte Temel İlkeler [The Fundamental Principles in Atatürkism]*, 4th ed., (Istanbul: Inkilap Yayınevi, 2000), 66-67.

⁶⁰ Ahmet Taner Kislali, *Atatürk’s Saldırmancılık Dayanılmaz Hafifliği [Irresistible Frivolity of Attack to Atatürk]*, (Ankara: İmge Yayınevi, 1993), 125.

Kemalist policies as the last phase of reform policies initiated by the Ottoman Empire. In the mid-1980s, Paul Dumont pointed out that, “Kemalists were guided by convictions that had already inspired several generations of Ottoman Turkish reformers and, duly assimilated, had become part of the national intellectual patrimony.”⁶¹ In the early 1990s, the importance of the Young Turks’ legacy was mentioned by the revisionist scholars. As an example, Feroz Ahmad stressed this legacy in his book *The Making of Modern Turkey* in 1993. In this book, Ahmad pointed out that “The Young Turks who came to power through the constitutional movement in 1908 retained the dynasty and tried to manipulate its legacy in order to carry out a programme of radical reform and structural change. On the other hand, the regime led by Mustafa Kemal which succeeded the Young Turks, tried totally to reject the entire legacy, abolished the monarchy, banished the dynasty, and set up a secular republic.”⁶² More recently Turkish scholars, like Sukru Hanioglu, shared the same idea that the Republican era was a period of triumph for the Young Turks’ ideology.⁶³ Finally, Hanioglu and this revisionist approach have evaluated the Kemalists' reforms as not a "radical and violent break with the past," but rather the culmination of an extensive reform process over at least the previous 200 years.⁶⁴

This revisionist approach stressed that with the help of Young Turks’ legacy, Mustafa Kemal established the scientific mentality as the core of the new republic.⁶⁵ Huseyin Aydin interpreted the importance of positivist ideology as “when Turkish intellectuals sought an ideology

⁶¹ Paul Dumont, “The Origins of Kemalist Ideology”, in *Ataturk and Modernization of Turkey*, ed. Jacob M. Landau, (Leiden: Brill, 1984), 25-45.

⁶² Feroz Ahmad, *The Making of Modern Turkey*, (London: Routledge, 1993), 15.

⁶³ M. Sukru Hanioglu, *The Young Turks in Opposition*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 8.

⁶⁴ M. Sukru Hanioglu, *Ataturk: An Intellectual Biography*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), 161.

⁶⁵ Orhan Dunder, *Ataturk Akli (Ataturk's Wisdom)*, (Istanbul: Alp Yayınevi, 2006) 222.

to save the country, they found positivism so popular and actual in Europe; therefore, they immediately embraced positivism and thought that science would be superior to everything.”⁶⁶ Writing in the early 1990s, Levent Koker emphasized that positivist thought was the most important notion which was inherited from the Young Turks’s legacy by Kemalists.⁶⁷ Serif Mardin also accepted the ideological heritage of Young Turks to Kemalists, in particular the positivist ideology. He distinguished Mustafa Kemal from his predecessors as using science as an important tool to reshape Turkish society.⁶⁸ Ali Kazancigil pointed out that many revolutions, such as, women’s rights, prohibition of polygamy, accepting hat instead of fez, secularization of education and law, and the language reform were dreamed by Young Turks, before they were realized by Kemalists during the Kemalist modernization.⁶⁹

A better way to understand the political development of Turkey is to examine concepts like autocracy and Jacobinism. These were not temporary phenomena, but rather central to the way Atatürk viewed political power. An autocracy is a form of government in which a country is ruled by a person or group with total power.⁷⁰ While Kemalist orthodoxy emphasizes the autocracy and single-party regime was a burden for Kemalists and asserts “in Turkey, single-party system is the result of the incapability of the first legislative assembly which could not demonstrate a positive

⁶⁶ Huseyin Aydin, *Aydinlanma'nin Ana Kucaginda Laiklik ve Ataturkculuk (Secularism and Ataturkism in the Mother's Bosom of Enlightenment)*, (Bursa: Emin Yayinlari, 2010), 103.

⁶⁷ Levent Koker, *Modernlesme, Kemalizm ve Demokrasi (Modernism, Kemalism, and Democracy)*, (Istanbul: Iletisim Yayinlari, 1993), 222.

⁶⁸ Serif Mardin, *Turkiye'de Toplum ve Siyaset (Society and Politics in Turkey)*, (Istanbul: Iletisim Yayinlari, 1992), 190.

⁶⁹ Ali Kazancigil, “Turkiye’de Modern Devletin Olusumu ve Kemalizm” (Formation of Modern State and Kemalism in Turkey), in *Turkiye’de Politic Degisim ve Modernlesme (Politic Change and Modernism in Turkey)*, ed. Ersin Kalaycioglu and Ali Yasar Saribay, (Istanbul: Alfa Aktuel Yayinlari, 2007), 185-186.

⁷⁰ <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/autocracy>

performance beyond discussions,”⁷¹ this dissertation rejects this Kemalist idea. In particular, parliamentary debates prove that the first legislative assembly which lasted until April 1923 was more democratic and plurivocal than other assemblies which were controlled strictly by the Kemalist majority. Even though the state was in condition of life and death, opposition stressed the importance of superiority of Assembly over any personality and it did not give up its rights to the Kemalist majority unconditionally.

In modern concept, Jacobin generally indicates a supporter of a centralized republican state and strong central government powers and supporters of extensive government intervention to transform society. Mustafa Kemal and his associates were guided by this concept of the Jacobin thought: “in the primacy of politics and in the ability of politics to reconstitute society.”⁷² Therefore, Mustafa Kemal started to increase his power during the Turkish War of Independence 1919-1922. His desire of controlling all of the powers in his hands became possible after the Supreme Commander Act of 1921. After that, Mustafa Kemal and his allies destroyed the traditional power, the office of sultanate and caliphate were abolished in 1922 and 1924. Finally this struggle ended as establishing a Jacobin style autocracy.

Kemalist orthodoxy has tolerated this Jacobin mentality of Kemalist reforms. One of the popular periodicals of 1930s, *Ulku [Ideal]*, defended the Kemalist Jacobinism in a utopian way in the late period of 1930s. Kemalist revolutionary elite generally felt themselves responsible for maturing and ascending the spiritual quality of people that would elevate them to a position at

⁷¹ Metin Heper, *Bürokratik Yönetim Gelenegi, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde Gelişmesi ve Niteliği [Tradition of Bureaucratic Administration, Its Advance and Quality in the Ottoman Empire and Republic of Turkey]*, (Ankara: İdari İlimler Fakültesi Yayınları, 1974), 95.

⁷² Shmuel Eisenstadt, *Fundamentalism, Sectarianism, and Revolution: The Jacobin Dimension of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 73.

which they can be represented.⁷³ In the 1980s, Niyazi Berkes evaluated Kemalist reforms that they seemed like Jacobin reforms because the society was so primitive at that time. According to him, Kemalist reforms had implemented by the help of a bunch of intellectuals.⁷⁴ In the 1990s, Taner Timur underlined the positive sides of Jacobinism in his article “*Sivil Toplum, Jakobenler ve Devrim.*” He stressed that Jacobins were the forefathers of democratization, and by rejecting the distinction between active and passive citizens, they saw to it that the population at large internalized the principle of universal suffrage... In a peasant society where the Enlightenment thought had not surpassed the tiny elite class, the Jacobins introduced the ideas of freedom and equality to the whole of population. Moreover, Timur pointed out that Kemalists followed the same path like the French Revolution and its Jacobin method as using violence against the opposition. From this perspective, Timur asserted that Kemalists created their nation like Jacobins.⁷⁵ Foreign scholars also described this Kemalist Jacobin mentality as reconstituting people. As an example, Eisenstadt emphasized that Jacobin faith “in the primacy of politics and in the ability of politics to reconstitute society” guided Mustafa Kemal and his associates.⁷⁶ More recently, Ahmet Insel stressed the importance of positivism and French Revolution behind the Kemalist Jacobin mentality. He emphasized that “Kemalism embraced the positivist comment of religion. Positivist comment of religion meant Jacobin tradition and it was not atheist but deist. Kemalism was so close with Jacobin tradition. French Revolution and Jacobin tradition were most

⁷³ Nusret Kemal, *Bizim Planımız [Our Plan]*, *Ulku* 3, no: 13, March 1934, 17.

⁷⁴ Niyazi Berkes, *Ataturk ve Devrimler [Ataturk and Revolutions]*, (Istanbul: Adam, 1982), 100.

⁷⁵ Taner Timur, “Sivil Toplum, Jakobenler ve Devrim”, *Mulkiye Dergisi* 23, no: 219, 26-29.

⁷⁶ Shmuel Eisenstadt, *Fundamentalism, Sectarianism, and Revolution: The Jacobin Dimension of Modernity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 73.

important inspiration sources of Kemalism.”⁷⁷ Hasan Under also described early modernization of Turkey as “the political method of Atatürk is Jacobenist, his attitude to people is paternalist.”⁷⁸

On the other hand, some Turkish and foreign scholars emphasized the negative effect of Jacobin mentality in a revisionist way. Writing in the early 1980s, Mete Tuncay indicated that Kemalism had a Jacobin approach which was proper to the basic character of positivism. Especially the motto “for people in spite of people” was an illusion for the Kemalist regime.⁷⁹ Serif Mardin stressed that the destruction of the old social order was one of the negative side of the Kemalist regime in the 1990s. According to Mardin, with the Kemalist prohibition of Islam as a social force, the link between the elite and the masses was cut once and for all. The old Ottoman social order had tolerated pluralism in a society held together by Islam. The Kemalist order was most of all based on a Jacobin conception of a Republic as one and indivisible, where all ideological minorities were assimilated and declared as feudal remnants.⁸⁰ Nilufer Gole asserted that Kemalism followed the French Jacobinism instead of Anglo Saxon liberalism, and this situation was a barrier on the way of the Turkish democracy.⁸¹ More recently, Ernesto Laclau underlined this Jacobin mentality of Kemalist regime as “during most of his rule- and this applies

⁷⁷ Ahmet Insel, “Giris” [Introduction], in *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce-2: Kemalizm [Political Thought in Modern Turkey-2: Kemalism]*, ed. Ahmet Insel, (Istanbul: İletisim Yayınları, 2004), 22.

⁷⁸ Hasan Under, “Atatürk İmgesinin Siyasal Yaşamdaki Rolü,” [The Role of Atatürk’s Image in Political Life], in *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce-2: Kemalizm [Political Thought in Modern Turkey-2: Kemalism]*, ed. Ahmet Insel, (Istanbul: İletisim Yayınları, 2004), 142.

⁷⁹ Mete Tuncay, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti’nde Tek Parti Yönetiminin Kurulması 1923-1931 [The Establishment of the Single Party Regime in Turkey 1923-1931]*, 3rd ed., (Istanbul: Cem Yayınevi, 1992), 215.

⁸⁰ Serif Mardin, “Projects as Methodology: Some Thoughts on Modern Turkish Social Science” in *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey*, ed. Sibel Bozdoğan and Reşat Kasaba (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), 70–71.

⁸¹ Nilufer Gole, *Melez Desenler- İslam ve Modernlik Üzerine [Hybrid Figures- on Islam and Modernism]*, (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2000), 99-100.

also to his immediate successors- Ataturk was confronted with the paradox of having to construct a ‘people’ without popular support.”⁸²

Modernization is a process of long-range cultural and social change accepted by members of the changing society as beneficial, inevitable, or on balance desirable. Modernization as a historical concept includes such specific aspects of change as industrialization of the economy or secularization of ideas. It involves a marked increase in geographic and social mobility, a spread of secular, scientific, and technical education.⁸³ Modernization became a phenomenon in many non-Western countries in the early eighteenth century and afterward. The West was symbolized by intellectual and scientific ascendancy, and provided the blueprint for the ideal society of the future for many states.⁸⁴ Thus, Turkish modernization was a product of this mentality.

Kemalist modernization was the last phase of this Turkish modernization which initiated by the Ottoman Empire at the end of the eighteenth century. In the Ottoman Empire, the period of Selim III (1789-1807) was considered as the starting point in dealing with modernization attempts when military defeats of the Ottoman forces in wars with the Western powers. Selim III's reign, from his accession in 1789 until 1792/93, after which the reform agenda shifted significantly to military reforms and the challenge of funding them.⁸⁵ After Selim III, Mahmud II was determined to modernize the empire by adopting European laws over the traditional Ottoman ones. Sultan Mahmud's first aim in modernizing the military was to remove the ineffective Janissaries and

⁸² Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, (London: Verso, 2005), 212-213.

⁸³ Robert E. Ward and Dankwart A. Rustow, *Political Modernization in Japan and Turkey*, (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1964), 3-4.

⁸⁴ Hanioglu, *Ataturk*, 54.

⁸⁵ Betul Basaran, *Selim III, Social Control and Policing in Istanbul at the End of the Eighteenth Century: Between Crisis and Order*, (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 72.

replace them with a modern army trained along European lines. After the destruction of Janissaries in 1826, the Ottoman Army and state officials all wore European style uniforms and progress was made in modernizing military, navy and state laws. The Tanzimat era extending from 1839 to 1876 brought many renovations and a completely different mentality to the Ottoman bureaucracy and institutions. As a matter of fact, Tanzimat renovations became the genesis of Ottoman constitutionalism which emerged in approximately 50 years after the proclamation of the Script.⁸⁶ Tanzimat reforms enabled to establish a constitutional monarchy in 1876. The First Constitutional Era lasted until 1878, when Abdülhamid II restored his own absolute monarchy after suspending the Assembly. The Second Constitutional Era established in 1908 after the Young Turk Revolution. The Ottoman parliament was assigned as a sovereign body and the constitution had more democratic and liberal features after this revolution.⁸⁷ Therefore, Kemalist modernizers got a great inheritance from all these reform movements.

Turkish modernization had many similarities with some other non-Western states, like Japan, Russia, and Iran, which aimed to modernize themselves in the military, economic, political, cultural, and educational areas. The strong-center model had naturally affected modernization in both countries. Like Peter the Great in Russia, Meiji in Japan, Mahmud II and Kemal Ataturk in Turkey, the leaders at the center in both political systems had always been the principal actors throughout the periods of modernization. Thus, rules were decided by the center. The center usually represented modernity; the periphery had represented the ancient and the obsolete. First, all rulers of these states were aware of their weakness against the Western superiority in military

⁸⁶ Secil Akgun, "The Emergence of Tanzimat in the Ottoman Empire," *Ankara Universitesi Osmanli Tarihi Arastirma ve Uygulama Merkezi Dergisi*, no: 2, 1991, 2.

⁸⁷ Selcuk Aksin Somel, *Historical Dictionary of the Ottoman Empire*. (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, 2003), 61.

like their counterpart the Ottoman Empire. After trying to solve their military problems, these states tried to modernize their social, political, and economic structures. Russians started their modernization before the Ottoman Empire. The apex of the Russian Westernization and modernization movement is seen as occurring during the reign of Peter the Great (1672-1725). His modernization efforts included almost every aspect of the Russian sociopolitical structure. Peter the Great tried to reform the state, the economy, the church, the military, education, and even private life in Russia. He forbade the seclusion of women and commanded both sexes to adopt European styles of dress. Besides, Peter the Great, Alexander II (1894-1917) was another “great reformer” in Russia. The modernization carried out by Alexander II aimed not to restore but to change life in Russia. During his reign he introduced key concepts of western jurisprudence including equality before the law, trial by jury, and the separation of criminal and civil laws.⁸⁸

Reforms aimed to restructure mainly the state apparatus in these modernizing states. The same need of modernization in state apparatus was also shared by some other non-Western states. One of these states was Japan. Type of Japanese and Turkish modernization was coined as “revolution from above” by Ellen Kay Trimberger. From her perspective, the extralegal takeover of political power and the initiation of economic, social, and political change was organized and led by some of the highest military and often civil bureaucrats in the old regime.⁸⁹ Like Ottoman Empire, Japan focused first and foremost on science and technology during the Meiji Period (enlightened government) after the late of 1860s. In 1868, Emperor Meiji proclaimed a five article “Charter Oath.” One of the most important articles of this Charter was a future establishment of

⁸⁸ Gokhan Bacik, “Turkey and Russia: Whither modernization?,” *Journal of Economic and Social Research* 3, 2002, 55-58.

⁸⁹ Ellen Kay Trimberger, *Revolution from Above: Military Bureaucrats and Development in Japan, Turkey, Egypt, and Peru*, (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1978), 3.

an Assembly. Japan's first modern legislature was the Imperial Diet established by the Meiji Constitution in force from 1889 to 1947. The Meiji Constitution was adopted on February 11, 1889 and the Imperial Diet first met on November 29, 1890. The Diet consisted of a House of Representatives and a House of Peers. The House of Representatives was directly elected, if on a limited franchise; universal adult male suffrage was introduced in 1925. Another important step was the abolition of feudalism in Meiji Restoration. This event enabled to centralize the state led to the establishment of national army drawn from all ranks of the society. The new government formulated national code of laws also. Moreover, the government pushed for the immediate formation of codes along Western lines. By 1871, two volumes of criminal codes were ready. The Gregorian calendar was adopted in this period also. In addition, with the realization that education could be an asset in the development of national industry, universal education was introduced.⁹⁰ The Meiji Restoration accelerated industrialization in Japan, which led to its rise as a military power by the year 1905, under the slogan of to “enrich the country and increase its military strength.”⁹¹

The Iranian modernization that started in the late period of the nineteenth century had some similarities with the Turkish modernization. First of all, Iranian case was also another modernization from above. Second, both countries transferred their political systems from monarchy to constitutionalism in similar periods, while the constitutional monarchy was established in 1876 first and then 1908 in Turkey, the Iranian constitutional period started in 1906. Like Turkish modernizers, the bulk of the Iranian reformers consisted of high government

⁹⁰ Gbingba Gbosoe, *Modernization of Japan*, (Bloomington, IN: iUniverse, 2006), 21-29.

⁹¹ Yoshiie Yoda, *The Foundations of Japan's Modernization: A Comparison With China's Path Towards Modernization*, (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 5.

bureaucrats in Persian embassies abroad, the few Western educated Persians, and some graduates of the Darolfonun, Iran's first modern school.⁹² When both Qajar and Ottoman dynasties were abolished in the 1920s, modernization efforts were carried out by two military autocrats in both states. Reza Shah's modernization efforts between 1924 and 1941 had many similarities with the Kemalist modernization. The shah began by mandating Western-style dress in an effort to make Iranians look more Western. In 1935, all men in Iran were ordered to wear a fedora or bowler hat, which was implemented in Turkey after the Hat Reform in 1925.⁹³ Another Iranian reform was in women's dress in this period. However, this reform caused many problems in the Iranian society. Many women, as a result, stopped leaving their homes and became isolated from much of the outside world during this modernizing period in Iran.

This dissertation contributes to this revisionism by looking at the parliamentary debates. My main argument in this thesis is that modernization is the most important aspect of Kemalism, because the Kemalist regime had a Jacobin-style modernization policy which implemented after the Kemalist autocracy was established in 1925. All the other arguments I make, and all the examples I give throughout the thesis serve to underline this main argument. I shall list the other important arguments showing in detail how they relate to my main argument. Assembly debates will be able to show that 1919-1925 was a period that many issues were unsettled. Policies about government, society, and religion were in flux. There were multiple positions, different political opinions in the Assembly. However, through a process of centralization and the establishment of

⁹² Mohsen M. Milani, *The Making of Iran's Islamic Revolution: from Monarchy to Islamic Republic*. 2nd ed. (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), 27.

⁹³ Houchang Chehabi, "Dress Codes for Men in Turkey and Iran," in *Men of Order: Authoritarian Modernization under Atatürk and Reza Shah 1918-1942*, ed. Touraj Atabaki and Erik Jan Zürcher, (London: I.B.Tauris, 2004), 222-225.

autocracy, these options were eliminated. One of the main goals of this dissertation is to uncover the openness of the debates before March 1925, when the Law on the Maintenance of Order was accepted. Thus, this dissertation contributes to our knowledge of early modern Turkish history, by providing news insights from parliamentary archival documents.

This dissertation will show Ataturk's opportunism. Chapter one focuses on the establishment of the Kemalist autocracy in the political structure of Turkey. While Kemalist orthodoxy has advocated that Kemalist ideology sought to create a modern, democratic and secular nation-state, this dissertation rejects the democratic mentality of the Kemalist modernization. On contrary, this dissertation will examine the Kemalist autocracy when Mustafa Kemal succeeded in using every opportunity, such as the Law of Supreme Commander Act in August 1921, the abolition of Sultanate in 1922, the establishment of Republic in 1923, the abolition of Caliphate in 1924, and the elimination of opposition in 1925, to establish his personal autocracy. Kemalist historiography emphasize that Mustafa Kemal had an explicit plan during his modernization efforts. Most of Kemalist scholars refer to the memoirs of Mazhar Mufit Bey, who was one of the closest friends of Mustafa Kemal, as a proof of this explicit plan of Mustafa Kemal to change the Turkish society.⁹⁴ However, if the Kemalist modernization at the beginning of 1920s is examined carefully, the discourse of Mustafa Kemal changed over and over again. Therefore, this dissertation will cover incoherent actions of Mustafa Kemal during the change of the political structure of Turkey in the first chapter.

Chapter two focuses on Kemalist reforms in social and legal structure of Turkey after the single-party regime was established. Kemalist leadership enabled to decrease the role of Islam in

⁹⁴ Mazhar Mufit Kansu, *Erzurum'dan Olumune Kadar Ataturk'le Beraber [Together with Ataturk, From Erzurum to his Death]*, (Ankara: Turk Tarih Kurumu Yayini, 1968), 74.

public life, and managed to reform the Islamic law codes, language and dress by its modernization efforts. All these reforms were made by top down methods. Most of them imposed from the country's capital center, Ankara, on the entire social masses or the periphery.⁹⁵ The goal of these top-down, state imposed political and cultural reforms of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk to create a secular society and state in Turkey.⁹⁶ While the Kemalist historiography depicts Mustafa Kemal as an idealistic figure during the modernization of Turkey, this chapter argues that this approach is not balanced. Although the Kemalist historiography asserts that Mustafa Kemal and his legacy represent carrying out Enlightenment ideals in an obsolete society almost totally ignorant of these principles, the Kemalist modernization got a great inheritance from its predecessors. Therefore, this chapter aims to scrutinize this continuity. It will particularly focus on the modernization of traditional customs and laws, such as the headgear reform of 1925, the abolition of dervish lodges in 1925, and a new Civil Code in 1926. The expansion of women's rights is one of the source of pride for many Kemalists. This chapter covers these contradictions by the help of wide primary sources which include the official reports of the Grand National Assembly, the Republican Era archives and a mass of periodicals which were published in 1920s in Turkey and in abroad. As such, beyond independence and initiation phase of, the examination of these records in the formation stage of Turkish system contributes to our knowledge of a shady era that has not been critically examined by students of Kemalism.

Chapter three focuses on educational policies of the Kemalist regime and its contradictions. Education was one of the important pillars of the Kemalist modernization and it was seen an important mechanism to create a new generation under the Kemalist doctrine by many Kemalist

⁹⁵ Odul Celep, *Kılıçdaroğlu's CHP: What Lies Ahead*, (Ankara: Seta Foundation, 2010), 11.

⁹⁶ M.Hakan Yavuz, *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 31.

scholars. Nationalist and secular education was the main goal for the Kemalist regime in 1920s and 1930s. While the regime wanted a secular education, there were many contradictions during this modernization in education.

From this study of political actions and legal, and educational reforms, a portrait of Kemalism emerges that is fundamentally different from the traditional view of Turkey's founding period. In particular, Assembly debates, which are not examined very well, expand our knowledge of Kemalist reforms and the formation of the political systems in the early Republican period.

Chapter 2 - The Establishment of Kemalist Autocracy in Turkey

The collapse of the Ottoman Empire became a fact after World War I. The Ottoman Empire joined World War I on the side of the Central powers (Germany and Austria-Hungary) against the Allied powers (France, Great Britain, and Russia) in November 1914. At the end of 1918, the situation for the Ottoman Empire was a catastrophe. It seemed that the “Sick Man of Europe” was about to die at last. The Committee of Union and Progress dictatorship had caused great resentment among Ottoman citizens and this broke the people’s will to defend the country. In July 1918, the last Ottoman Sultan, Mehmed VI, had succeeded to the throne. In October, the CUP ministers resigned and the new Sultan appointed Ahmed Izzet Pasha as Grand Vizier with the task of reaching an armistice.⁹⁷ The armistice of Mudros was negotiated by Vice-Admiral Calthorpe, the chief British plenipotentiary, and Huseyin Rauf Bey, his Turkish counterpart. After three days of preliminary negotiation, on October 29, 1918, Rauf Bey went on board H.M.S. Agamemnon and signed the armistice the next day. World War I ended for the Ottoman Empire in the Armistice of Mudros on October 30, 1918.⁹⁸ Following the armistice, the Allied powers immediately started to occupy Mosul, Iskenderun, Antep, Maras, Mersin, and Adana, which had been in the possession of the Ottoman armies before the armistice. On November 13, 1918, Allied warships anchored in the harbor of Istanbul. In 1919, Greek troops began to occupy Izmir and the Aegean region. Italian troops landed in Antalya. The French occupied Adana. British forces entered Antep, Birecik,

⁹⁷ Metin Heper, *Historical Dictionary of Turkey*, (Lanham: The Scarecrow Press, 2002), 211. Lewis, *The Emergence*, 234.

⁹⁸ Meliha Benli Altunisik and Ozlem Tur, *Turkey: Challenges of Continuity and Change*, (London: Routledge Curzon, 2005), 12. Roderic H. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1876*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963), 118. On the other hand some of the authors indicate mistakenly the date of the Armistice of Mudros as October 31, 1918, such as Douglas A. Howard, *The History of Turkey*, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001), 84. Irfan Orga, *Phoenix Ascendant: The Rise of Modern Turkey*, (London: Robert Hale Limited, 1957), 69.

Maras and Urfa in the southeast, Batumi and Kars in the northeast, and Samsun on the Black sea coast.⁹⁹ This occupation of different parts of Anatolia, ethnically Turkish, caused the emergence of the resistance movements.

The emergence of the national struggle against the Allies was analyzed by Mustafa Kemal in his six-day long speech delivered in October 1927. In this speech, Mustafa Kemal indicated that the national struggle started with his arrival in Samsun on May 19, 1919, to organize the Turkish people in Anatolia to “save the homeland from enemies.”¹⁰⁰ This approach has been widely accepted by Kemalist historiography. While some authors emphasize that in the Turkish War of Independence the nationalist movement was launched by Mustafa Kemal and his allies,¹⁰¹ some authors give the main portion to Mustafa Kemal alone.¹⁰² As an example Asa Lundgren writes: “A nationalist resistance movement, ‘the Committee for the Defense of Rights of Anatolia and Rumeli’ was formed in 1919 under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal.”¹⁰³ Moreover, the official discourse disregarded the roles of the members of the Istanbul government, other leading figures, and intellectuals in the national struggle.¹⁰⁴

While the official discourse gives credit to Mustafa Kemal and his efforts after his arrival in Samsun, resistance movements emerged in different parts of Turkey only a few days after the Armistice of Mudros was signed. There were a number of Defense of Rights organizations in Anatolia and Thrace that aimed to resist Armenian and Greek territorial demands at the regional

⁹⁹ Lundgren, *The Unwelcome Neighbor*, 29. Lewis, *The Emergence*, 235. Ozkan, *From the Abode of Islam*, 80.

¹⁰⁰ Ozkan, *From the Abode of Islam*, 81.

¹⁰¹ Tamkoc, *The Warrior Diplomats*, 8.

¹⁰² Heper, *Historical Dictionary*, 14.

¹⁰³ Lundgren, *The Unwelcome Neighbor*, 30.

¹⁰⁴ Ozkan, *From the Abode of Islam*, 81.

level, and established before Mustafa Kemal arrived in Samsun. The first was established in Thrace as a “Society for the Defense of Rights” in November 1918 at Edirne. Izmir followed with its own regional organization in December 1918. In the eastern Ottoman Empire, the first organization was founded in Kars in November 1918, followed by Trabzon and Erzurum, both in February 1919.¹⁰⁵ The main force behind these societies was local branches of the Committee of Union and Progress in the provinces. Beyond these local branches, the “Karakol (Guard) society” also established a national resistance movement in Anatolia. The actual founders of the Karakol were Colonel Kara (Black) Vasif (an important member of the inner circle of Unionist officers) and Kara Kemal, the Unionist party boss in Istanbul. The society’s main goal was to strengthen resistance in Anatolia and the Caucasus by sending able people, money, arms and supplies from the capital.¹⁰⁶ While the impact of these societies was limited, the national struggle accelerated after Mustafa Kemal joined the resistance movement in Anatolia in May 1919.

During the World War I, Mustafa Kemal successfully defended the Dardanelles against a large Allied fleet in 1915. Despite his prestige as the only remaining victorious general in the Ottoman Empire,¹⁰⁷ the political situation was not in favor of Mustafa Kemal’s career in Istanbul in 1919. He was convinced by his close friends in the General Staff to head for Anatolia in May 1919. When the government of Sultan Mehmed VI requested that he go to Anatolia to enforce the disarmament of the Ottoman troops there, in accordance with the conditions laid down in the Armistice of Mudros, Mustafa Kemal used this chance for his later career. Mustafa Kemal was appointed by Sultan Mehmed VI as the Inspector-General in the Third Army in eastern Anatolia

¹⁰⁵ Zurcher, *Turkey*, 148. Tamkoc, *The Warrior Diplomats*, 76. Ozkan, *From the Abode of Islam*, 81.

¹⁰⁶ Howard, *History of Turkey*, 85. Zurcher, *Turkey*, 135-136.

¹⁰⁷ Lewis, *The Emergence*, 240.

on April 30, 1919.¹⁰⁸ Valentine Chirol interpreted this appointment as: “the nationalists found a leader who had shown himself possessed of fine military qualities during the Great War.”¹⁰⁹ After the patriots in Istanbul had arranged his appointment, other patriots in Anatolia prepared for his arrival in May 1919. His participation to the national struggle as a brilliant soldier and an intelligent leader, brought the Turkish War of Independence to victory. Mustafa Kemal’s fellow countrymen had proved themselves ready to fight under his leadership for the survival of the Turkish people.¹¹⁰

After the agreements between the resistance movement and the Istanbul government, the last Ottoman Parliament, which was formed after elections in autumn 1919, opened on January 12, 1920. The Parliament adopted the National Pact in a secret session on January 28, 1920. The National Pact was published on February 17, 1920. The core of the National Pact was rejection of partition and foreign occupation of Anatolia and Eastern Thrace and the realization of the objectives of the resistance movement.¹¹¹ The first article of the National Pact defined the boundaries of the Ottoman state and advocated not Turkish national sovereignty but that of all Muslim Ottomans, i.e. Turks, Kurds, Lazs, and Circassians. The reaction of the Allies to the National Pact was the occupation of Istanbul by Britain on March 16, 1920. The last Ottoman Parliament was finally dissolved by the Sultan on April 11, 1920.¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ Heper, *Historical Dictionary*, 14.

¹⁰⁹ Chirol, *The Turkish Empire*, 396.

¹¹⁰ George Gawrych, *The Young Atatürk: From Ottoman Soldier to Statesman of Turkey*, (London: I. B. Tauris, 2013), 68. Lord Kinross, *Ottoman Centuries: The Rise and fall of the Turkish Empire*, (London: Jonathan Cape Ltd., 1977), 621. Eleanor Bisbee, *The New Turks: Pioneers of the Republic, 1920-1950*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1951), 17.

¹¹¹ Altunisik and Tur, *Turkey*, 13-14. Zürcher, *Turkey*, 138.

¹¹² Dietrich Jung and Wolfango Piccoli, *Turkey at the Crossroads: Ottoman Legacies and A greater Middle East*, (London: Zed Books, 2001), 68. Howard, *History of Turkey*, 86. Zürcher, *Turkey*, 139.

The British occupation of Istanbul and closure of the last Ottoman parliament enabled Mustafa Kemal and his associates to organize a new Assembly in Ankara.¹¹³ As an opportunist and pragmatist leader Mustafa Kemal decided to take advantage of the religious feelings of the people. Prior to the opening of the Grand National Assembly in Ankara, he issued a proclamation on April 21, 1920, in which he stated that the opening of the assembly would take place on Friday, April 23, a holy day in Islam. After the religious ceremonies were held with all “honorable deputies” reciting from the Koran and other Islamic prayers, sermons were delivered on the importance and sacred character of the National Struggle. Mustafa Kemal participated these prayers, and his prayers made for an excellent photograph for propaganda purposes later.¹¹⁴ Finally, the Grand National Assembly was established in Ankara on April 23, 1920. This Assembly henceforth conducted the National Struggle in the name of the nation. After the establishment of the Assembly in Ankara, the city became the de facto seat of the provisional government in Turkey. Moreover, the new Parliament became the government’s source of legitimacy.¹¹⁵ After the establishment of the Turkish Grand National Assembly, Mustafa Kemal strengthened his position within the state.

During the War of Independence, 1919–1922, the Ankara parliament was composed of different types of deputies. It was quite a heterogeneous and unruly body. In this period, there were 337 deputies in this Assembly including conservatives, liberals, and socialists.¹¹⁶ They had only

¹¹³ Ersin Kalaycioglu, *Turkish Dynamics: Bridge across Troubled Lands*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 38.

¹¹⁴ Tamkoc, *The Warrior Diplomats*, 84. Gawrych, *Young Ataturk*, 104.

¹¹⁵ M. Philips Price, *A History of Turkey: From Empire to Republic*, (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1956), 122. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire*, 123. Jung and Piccoli, *Turkey at the Crossroads*, 68. Lewis, *The Emergence*, 246.

¹¹⁶ Ahmet Demirel, *Birinci Meclis'te Muhalefet: Ikinci Grup [Opposition in the First Assembly: The Second Group]*, (Istanbul: Iletisim yayinlari, 1994), 92. Zurcher, *Turkey*, 159.

one main goal: to rescue the homeland from invasion by the Allies. Some minor groups emerged at the early stage of the Grand National Assembly. The distinction between these groups was related to their political ideas. The differences among the deputies soon became opposing factions by the end of 1920, though precise numerical strength is hard to determine. The conservatives established ‘Muhafaza-yi Mukaddesat’ (the Protection of the Holy Concepts) in January 1921 under the leadership of Hoca Raif Efendi. This conservative group opposed socialist and Bolshevik ideas which had a great influence on the Kemalist leadership at that time. Moreover, this conservative group strongly defended the rights of Sultan and Caliph. Besides, most of the members of this group opposed any kind of modernization attempt which was against Islamic sharia.¹¹⁷

The second group in the Assembly was the socialists. During the Turkish War of Independence, the Bolshevik regime in Russia gave its support to the Ankara Government and this collaboration influenced some MPs in the Assembly. The Bolshevik infiltration in Anatolia became stronger after the various leftist groups were established within the Grand National Assembly. The total number of these groups is not clear. These organizations were the Communist Party of Turkey (TKP) and its peers, the Green Army Association (Yesil Ordu Cemiyeti) and People’s Communist Party (Halk Istirakiyun Firkasi).¹¹⁸ The Green Army was the first organization which was established in May 1920, with the approval of Mustafa Kemal Pasha.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ Erdal Aydoğan and Asaf Özkan, “Erzurum Muhafaza-i Mukaddesat ve Mudafaa-i Hukuk Cemiyeti” [The Society of the Protection of the Holy Concepts and the Defence of the Law of Erzurum], *Firat University Journal of Science* 21, no. 1, (2011), 315-338.

¹¹⁸ Bulent Gökay, *A Clash of Empires: Turkey between Russian Bolshevism and British Imperialism, 1918-1923*, (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 1997), 105.

¹¹⁹ Kinross, *Ataturk*, 283.

The organization consisted of people who supported a mixture of Islamic, anti-imperialist, and socialist ideas. When Cerkez Ethem, the head of the Circassian irregular fighters, joined the Green Army, it became a force to be reckoned with and a potential threat to Mustafa Kemal's leadership.¹²⁰ Beyond Cerkez Ethem's defiance of Mustafa Kemal, the main threat of the Green Army was seeing itself as a Turkish counterpart of the Russian Red Army. It started to spread its influence through a subversive newspaper *Yeni Dunya (New World)* published in Eskisehir. The newspaper was useful to Bolshevik agents who exploited the discontent of the Turkish peasantry and indoctrinated irregular soldiers. This was not acceptable to Mustafa Kemal, whose leadership was threatened by these underground communist activities, so the Green Army was disbanded in July 1920 by his order. However, the radicals of the Green Army reorganized as the Halk Zumresi (People's Faction) the same month.¹²¹

While the Bolshevik influence was a threat to Mustafa Kemal's leadership, he still needed Bolshevik help to overcome the invaders. To control underground communist activities and not lose Bolshevik interest, Mustafa Kemal decided to establish a communist party under his control. Therefore, the official Communist Party of Turkey was established on October 18, 1920 in Ankara. While Mustafa Kemal forced the communist and leftist-leaning deputies to join this Party, he always kept control over it by help of his friends within the organization.¹²² On the other hand, the Bolshevik regime supported the unofficial Communist Party of Turkey, led by Mustafa Suphi,¹²³

¹²⁰ Zurcher, *Turkey*, 156-157.

¹²¹ Kinross, *Ataturk*, 283-284. Zurcher, *Turkey*, 157.

¹²² Sonyel, *Turkish Diplomacy*, 58. Gawrych, *Young Ataturk*, 114. Zurcher, *Turkey*, 157.

¹²³ Mustafa Suphi was a former high school teacher and Unionist who had fled to Russia in 1914 and had been interned there during the war. After the revolution he had helped to spread communist ideas among the 60,000 Turkish prisoners of war in Russia. He was killed by the local Kemalists in Trabzon with his 15 comrades in January 1921. Zurcher, *Turkey*, 157. Sonyel, *Turkish Diplomacy*, 58.

which was established after the Baku Congress in September 1920. The followers of Mustafa Suphi established the People's Communist Party (Halk İstirakiyun Firkasi) in December 1920 within the Grand National Assembly. When this real Communist Party became influential by accepting Bolshevik ideas, the party was suppressed and its members brought to trial by the Kemalist regime in January 1921.¹²⁴ The party reemerged in August 1921, but was banned totally in September 1922 after the War of Independence was won. This party was a real socialist organization which defended the rights of peasants and workers.¹²⁵ The liberal group in the Assembly was popular among the young MPs who mostly supported Mustafa Kemal. They advocated the general welfare of the people, the continuation of the reforms begun during the Constitutional Era, and popular participation in administration. The numerical strength group was unknown also.

While these groups had limited influence in the Assembly, the real struggle between the Kemalist majority and the opponents started in May 1921. To alleviate clashes between the different cliques and achieve a harmony among his followers, Mustafa Kemal and his close associates formed Mudafaa-i Hukuk Grubu (the group of Defense of the Law) on May 10, 1921. The Kemalist majority reached 202 members during the first period of the Assembly.¹²⁶ After the formation of the Mudafa-i Hukuk Grubu in May 1921, the rest of the deputies became independent in the Assembly. After this date, an opposition emerged in the Assembly and the clashes between the Kemalist majority and the opposition became intense. In July 1922, some of these independent

¹²⁴ Sonyel, *Turkish Diplomacy*, 58-59. Heper, *Historical Dictionary*, 199. Zurcher, *Turkey*, 157.

¹²⁵ Emel Akal, *Moskova-Ankara-Londra Üçgeninde İştirakiyuncular, Komünistler ve Pasa Hazretleri [The Communists and His Excellency Pasha in the Triangle of Moscow-Ankara-London]*, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2014), 289-298.

¹²⁶ Zurcher, *Turkey*, 159. Demirel, *Birinci Meclis'te Muhalefet*, 203.

deputies, opposed to the autocratic tendencies of Mustafa Kemal, united officially under the name of Second Group of Defense of the Law, or simply Second Group, during the discussions about the third extension of the Supreme Commander Act.¹²⁷ The total number of the Second Group reached 63 members in early 1923. The Second Group was an active opposition to the Kemalist majority within the Parliament. Kemalist historiography categorizes the Kemalist majority as reformist and the Second Group as conservative and against national sovereignty. On the contrary, in the abolition of the Sultanate, the Second Group agreed with the Kemalist majority.¹²⁸ Moreover, this group was ideologically very heterogeneous, including conservative, liberal, and socialist deputies within the group. Their main goal was to decrease Mustafa Kemal's growing autocracy and radicalism.¹²⁹ The Second Group was a very strong opposition any kind of personal autocracy or dictatorship under the name of Sultan or President. This attitude was seen many times during the extensions of the Supreme Commander Act. Over the next two years, the Kemalists moved to end this opposition and establish an autocracy under Kemal. The Assembly debates reveal this process.

This chapter will examine the establishment of the Kemalist autocracy when Mustafa Kemal utilized every single event to establish an autocracy instead of a democratic regime. The Law of Supreme Commander Act in August 1921, the abolition of Sultanate in 1922, the establishment of Republic in 1923, the abolition of Caliphate in 1924, and the elimination of opposition in 1925 were the key events on the way of the establishment of this personal autocracy.

¹²⁷ Ihsan Gunes, *Birinci Turkiye Buyuk Millet Meclisi'nin Dusunce Yapisi: 1920-1923 [The Intellectual Structure of the First Period of the Turkish Grand National Assembly: 1920-1923]*, (Istanbul: Turkiye Is Bankasi Yayinlari, 2009), 142-152.

¹²⁸ Demirel, *Birinci Meclis'te Muhalefet*, 203.

¹²⁹ Zurcher, *Turkey*, 159.

This chapter will scrutinize these key events by using the official reports of the Turkish Grand National Assembly, archival documents from the Premiership Archive, and the periodicals of 1920s and 1930s both in Turkey and in abroad comprehensively. In particular, it will use the records of Assembly debates in both open and secret sessions, not previously used enough by foreign and Turkish scholars, to understand the creation of this autocracy.

2.1 Unity of Powers and the Supreme Commander Act of 1921: First Attempt to the Autocracy

Unity of powers is the assemblage of legislative, executive, and judicial branches of power in the hands of a single person or an institution. Unity of powers has mostly taken place in monarchic and despotic regimes. This notion is totally against the principles of democracy. Freedom of speech and thought are at risk of in these regimes because of its control of the judicial system. Therefore, the separation of powers is an alternative to this system. Under the model of separation of powers, the state is divided into branches, each with separate and independent powers and areas of responsibility so that the powers of one branch are not in conflict with the powers associated with the other branches. In Turkey, unity of power was established in April 1920 after the Grand National Assembly was inaugurated. This implementation was maintained in the Constitution of 1921 and 1924.¹³⁰

Unity of powers suited Mustafa Kemal's possible autocracy. While the Kemalist orthodoxy asserts unity of powers was a product of the extraordinary conditions of the Turkish War of Independence,¹³¹ Mustafa Kemal retained this political concept until his death. As an example, in

¹³⁰ Ergun Ozbudun, *1921 Anayasasi [The Constitution of 1921]*, (Ankara: Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Yayınları, 1992), 10.

¹³¹ Hamza Eroğlu, *Türk Devrim Tarihi, [History of the Turkish Revolution]*, (Ankara: Emel Matbaacılık, 1974), 118. Mumcu, *Tarih Acısından*, 54.

the book of “Medeni Bilgiler”, which was written in the early 1930s, he supported unity of power and asserted that the separation of powers did not fit the Turkish nation.¹³² This book was one of the main ideological books for raising the future generation. From this perspective, even though the extraordinary conditions of war were over, the Kemalist regime maintained full powers in its hands. Moreover, Mustafa Kemal’s Republican People’s Party maintained the form of administration of Turkish nation as unity of power in its program until 1947.¹³³ For a better understanding of the establishment of the Kemalist autocracy, it is helpful to scrutinize the discussions of the legal status of the state in the first period of the Assembly which lasted from April 1920 to April 1923. The Assembly debates, which are not mentioned completely before, will be helpful to cover this subject.

The Grand National Assembly of Turkey, which was inaugurated on April 23, 1920, adopted the principle of unity of power as governmental system the next day. In his resolution, Mustafa Kemal underlined the extraordinary situation of country and the exigency of forming a government at that period. In the fourth article of his resolution, Mustafa Kemal declared that the Grand National Assembly had legislative and executive authority. A committee which included some of the members of the Assembly would deal with governmental duties. The speaker of the Assembly would be the head of this committee also.¹³⁴ The resolution was discussed on May 1, 1920, in the Assembly. It was accepted by the votes of 110 deputies the next day. 15 deputies were

¹³² Afet Inan, *Medeni Bilgiler ve M. Kemal Atatürk’un El Yazıları [Civilized Knowledge and the Manuscripts of M. Kemal Atatürk]*, (Ankara: Turk Tarih Kurumu Yayinlari, 1998), 34.

¹³³ Balta, *Türkiye’de Yurutme Kudreti*, 14.

¹³⁴ *TBMM ZC*, 24 Apr. 1920, v.1, 31-32.

against this resolution and 5 of them abstained.¹³⁵ Law #3¹³⁶ was promulgated on May 2, 1920, concerning the selection of the Council of Ministers.¹³⁷ One of the interesting detail of this law is that all opponents of this resolution, except Refik Sevket Bey, became members of the Second Group who could not elected for the second period of the Assembly in August 1923.

The struggle for power between the Kemalist majority and the opposition was seen in the first period of the Grand National Assembly. The opposition group, which would become the Second Group in 1922, was against the notion of unity of power which enabled Mustafa Kemal to establish his dictatorship. Law #3 gave an opportunity to Mustafa Kemal to be president of the Assembly and the head of Government at the same time. The opposition forced Mustafa Kemal to leave his position as head of the Government in January 24, 1921.¹³⁸ This was a significant chance to stop Mustafa Kemal's desire to gather all of powers in his hands. However, the desperate situation in the battle of Kutahya-Eskisehir in July 1921, gave a chance for Mustafa Kemal to take all powers in his hands by the Supreme Commander Act in August 1921.

After the third offensive attack of the Greek army, the Greeks succeeded in capturing the important towns Afyon-Karahisar, Kutahya, and finally Eskisehir in summer 1921. Due to Turkish defeat in this battle, the Turkish War of Independence of 1919–1922 turned into a gloomy phase. While two military victories at Inonu in January and April 1921, and the Treaty of Moscow in March 1921 had strengthened Mustafa Kemal's position within the state, the fall of Eskisehir and

¹³⁵ TBMM ZC, 2 May 1920, v.1, 186.

¹³⁶ Law #3 was related with the election of the Council of Ministers of Ankara Government. The Assembly accepted to establish a government with 11 ministries. Mustafa Kemal was the head of this council and President of the Assembly at the same time.

¹³⁷ Naim Kapucu and Hamit Palabiyik, *Turkish Public Administration from Tradition to the Modern Age*, (Ankara: International Strategic Research Organization Publication, 2008), 45.

¹³⁸ TBMM ZC, 26 Jan. 1921, v.7, 372-373.

the possibility of the evacuation of Ankara caused a blow in his leadership. The decision to evacuate Ankara represented the lowest point in his leadership in the War of Independence. In this difficult period, hope for the salvation of country, which was the ultimate goal of the National Pact, was decreasing among the deputies in the Assembly at Ankara. When the Ankara government prepared to flee, a number of deputies in the Grand National Assembly compelled Mustafa Kemal to decide on a more determined stand in defense of Ankara. This difficult crisis of the state gave an opportunity for personal gain, military success, and national survival to Mustafa Kemal after centralizing the entire authority of the Grand National Assembly to his hands.¹³⁹

Mustafa Kemal's close companions supported him in achieving his opportunistic goals. For regaining hope for salvation, the Kemalist deputies introduced a bill, which charged Mustafa Kemal Pasha with the duty of supreme commander of the Turkish Army. George Gawrych also describes this initiative as: "Mustafa Kemal relied on loyal deputies to facilitate the passage of this enabling price of legislation. A handful of deputies submitted a bill that would confer upon Mustafa Kemal the position of commander in chief."¹⁴⁰

Lord Kinross emphasizes this crisis as an "ironical chance" for Mustafa Kemal to obtain full power. He describes the situation as: "by an ironical chance Kemal in this crisis had for the first time the support of the bulk of the Assembly. He would thus obtain the supreme command. But he must obtain it on his own terms. While the storm raged within and without the Assembly, he kept a wary silence, showing no disposition to accept the command, and thus turning into a positive conviction the general fear that disaster was inevitable. As soon as he judged that feeling had reached this point he called a secret session and mounted the rostrum. He agreed to accept the

¹³⁹ Gawrych, *Young Ataturk*, 152. Tamkoc, *The Warrior Diplomats*, 18. Kinross, *Ataturk*, 311.

¹⁴⁰ Gawrych, *Young Ataturk*, 152.

supreme command provided he was given the full powers of the Assembly. Only thus could he prepare the army with sufficient speed for the next round in the struggle.”¹⁴¹ From this point of view, Mustafa Kemal waited until desperation made his rule appear to be right choice to obtain the full authority of the Assembly to his hands.

Mustafa Kemal’s desire for obtaining complete power was related to his character. Irfan Orga stresses the character of Mustafa Kemal as: “his greatest failing was his egocentricity; convinced as he was that only he could save the nation, he could not bear to see anyone else assuming popularity or getting too much attention. He could not govern alone but he distrusted everyone around him. The Assembly, as the voice of the nation, was often vociferous in its untimely demands; many of the deputies were right thinking, level headed men and they resented his appropriation of power. He detested criticism, feeling that those who criticized had the least ability to do so.”¹⁴²

While Mustafa Kemal detested criticism, the Supreme Commander Act was discussed many times in secret sessions in the Grand National Assembly. Its extensions were criticized mostly by the opposition. While the opposition showed their dissatisfaction to the act in secret sessions, they tried to show the unity of the Assembly in the open sessions. This act was the first attempt of Mustafa Kemal to control the state and the first step to establish his personal autocracy. While Kemalists stressed the extraordinary situation, the policy did not change even in more normal times.

Kemalist deputies thought that the fate of the Turkish War of Independence required a strong commander who would lead the entire army. Therefore, his friends requested that the Grand

¹⁴¹ Kinross, *Ataturk*, 310.

¹⁴² Orga, *Phoenix Ascendant*, 111.

National Assembly give more authority to Mustafa Kemal. Vehbi Bey, pro-Kemalist deputy of Karesi, underlined that if Mustafa Kemal undertook the Supreme Military Command, the problems could be solved within 15 days.¹⁴³ Mustafa Kemal was also aware of this unlimited power. He warned the Assembly if it interfered in his military duties, the situation would be worse. He underlined that it would be impossible to manage these difficult problems by the written laws and a mutual agreement of the Assembly. By his word, Mustafa Kemal hinted his need for getting extraordinary authority to manage the military problems.¹⁴⁴

The Supreme Commander Act was discussed in the Grand National Assembly on August 5, 1921. Article two stated that “in order to develop the forces of the army materially and morally to the fullest extent, so as to secure and consolidate the leadership and the administration of these forces, the Commander in Chief will be authorized to exercise full powers of the TBMM in the name of the Assembly in these matters.” Article three limited this authority to three months but with the possibility of renewal.”¹⁴⁵ During the debates over this act, Mustafa Kemal played his cards very well to convince deputies in the Assembly. After he thanked to the Assembly for their confidence, he requested to limit his authority to three months as a representation of his loyalty to national sovereignty.¹⁴⁶ However, his opponents were aware of his desire for absolute power. The opponents criticized Mustafa Kemal especially in the subjects of his title and unlimited authorities.

¹⁴³ TBMM ZC (*secret session*), 2 Aug. 1921, v. 2, 141.

¹⁴⁴ TBMM ZC (*secret session*), 2 Aug. 1921, v. 2, 141-142.

¹⁴⁵ Gawrych, *Young Atatürk*, 152-155.

¹⁴⁶ TBMM ZC (*secret session*), 5 Aug. 1921, v. 2, 164.

First Selahaddin Bey, one of the prominent figures of the Second Group and deputy of Mersin, insisted on using the title of the “Vice-Supreme Commander”¹⁴⁷ because of his belief that the Office of Supreme Commander was retained by the Grand National Assembly. If Mustafa Kemal wanted to use the title of Supreme Commander, it would be misunderstood at home and abroad as Mustafa Kemal becoming the new Sultan of Turkey.¹⁴⁸ This approach was one of the common concerns of the opponents against Mustafa Kemal at that period. Mustafa Kemal rejected this proposal unconditionally. He would be Supreme Commander or nothing at all.¹⁴⁹ Hakki Hami Bey, deputy of Sinop and later a member of the Second Group, criticized Mustafa Kemal about the issue of his unlimited authority. According to him, within these three months the Grand National Assembly would not be existent. All of its powers would be held by a single authority.¹⁵⁰

The probability of establishing a dictatorship was another concern of many deputies. Not only opponents but even some Kemalist deputies had this concern. As an example Seref Bey, who was an ardent Kemalist deputy at that time, supported the extraordinary authorities which were demanded by Mustafa Kemal. He believed that those authorities were necessary, and he gave some historical examples to support his idea. However, he had some doubts after Mustafa Kemal’s resolution. He feared creating another Napoleon and establishing a dictatorship in Turkey. Seref Bey disavowed his concerns later and said that Mustafa Kemal Pasha would prefer to be a servant of national will instead of being a Sultan. However, the concern was not removed totally. Hulusi Bey, an opposition deputy of Karahisar, showed his fear that the events would turn Mustafa Kemal

¹⁴⁷ According to the Ottoman tradition, the Sultan was the Supreme Commander. During the First World War Enver Pasha used the title of Vice-Supreme Commander.

¹⁴⁸ *TBMM ZC (secret session)*, 5 Aug. 1921, v. 2, 164-165.

¹⁴⁹ Orga, *Phoenix Ascendant*, 106. Kinross, *Ataturk*, 310-311.

¹⁵⁰ *TBMM ZC (secret session)*, 5 Aug. 1921, v. 2, 165.

in a different channel, like establishing a dictatorship. Therefore, Grand National Assembly should not give its authority to any person.¹⁵¹ Those concerns became a reality after 1926. After that year, there was not any opposition to the Kemalist regime in the political arena in Turkey.

While opponents increased their voices against Mustafa Kemal, he responded to all these critics in a very clever way. First of all he rejected the title of “Vice-Supreme Commander” as an outmoded title which was used in the First World War. According to Mustafa Kemal, using the same title was unnecessary. Another drawback to this title was the approval of the Sultan. Mustafa Kemal asserted that if Sultan Mehmed VI would say that he did not appoint any Vice-Supreme Commander, the situation would be problematic for the Assembly. His possible refusal to appoint someone for this title would be an obstacle for future. Moreover, he did not violate the Grand National Assembly’s possession of this title. Mustafa Kemal underlined the three-month limit of his emergency authority which would be important in this very crucial period. In the dictatorship question, Mustafa Kemal accepted the opponents’ concerns as reasonable and logical. However, he thought that there was no need for obtaining authority from Assembly. The duty of Supreme Commander should be based on confidence. Mustafa Kemal tried to convince the Assembly as these words: “if you don’t have any confidence to your leader, it is harmful to entrust him.”¹⁵²

While these words swayed most of deputies in the Assembly, the opposition continued their resistance to this extraordinary law. Selahaddin Bey, deputy of Mersin, especially emphasized the situation of country was not sufficiently bad to take these kinds of extraordinary measures. He pointed out that the subject should be discussed very carefully. He did not want to leave his rights to any person because of the second matter of this Act, and would retain these rights for the benefit

¹⁵¹ TBMM ZC (*secret session*), 5 Aug. 1921, v. 2, 167-168.

¹⁵² TBMM ZC (*secret session*), 5 Aug. 1921, v. 2, 165-168.

of the people.¹⁵³ The resistance of opponents had some effect in the second session. Mustafa Kemal accepted the possible disadvantages if the Assembly would cede its legislative and executive authorities to any person. He forced himself to express his appreciation for the attitude of the Assembly in this subject.¹⁵⁴

In the second session, most of the deputies talked about the possibility of establishing a dictatorship. Mustafa Durak Bey, an independent deputy of Erzurum, was in favor of giving a title to Mustafa Kemal as “Commander of Nation” instead of the Supreme Commander. Riza Nur Bey, pro-Kemalist deputy of Sinop who later became Minister of Health and Education, was anxious about appointing someone with unlimited powers. He wanted to add a limitation to the law as “...except to change and to abolish the Assembly and to keep the inviolability of deputies.” He thought that this matter would stop a personal autocracy. Kemalist deputies tried to assuage these concerns by pointing to the situation at that time. Emin Bey, a close associate of Mustafa Kemal and deputy of Eskisehir, was in favor of appointing unlimited authorities to Mustafa Kemal. He said that if Mustafa Kemal used his authority for a dictatorship, this would be beneficial for the state. Moreover, if Emin Bey had a chance to give a title to Mustafa Kemal, he would give him a title more important than Sultan. Another deputy raised the Greek invasion and said he preferred to be under the feet of Mustafa Kemal Pasha than under the rule of Greek invaders.¹⁵⁵ While Kemalist deputies tried to convince the Assembly by invoking the extraordinary situation, the opponents still had concerns about the future of the state. They were so anxious about a possible

¹⁵³ *TBMM ZC (secret session)*, 5 Aug. 1921, v. 2, 169-171.

¹⁵⁴ *TBMM ZC (secret session)*, 5 Aug. 1921, v. 2, 177.

¹⁵⁵ *TBMM ZC (secret session)*, 5 Aug. 1921, v. 2, 177-180.

dictatorship after ceding the authority of Grand National Assembly to a person. This concern became a fact when Mustafa Kemal controlled the state totally in 1926.

The act was accepted by the votes of 169 deputies on August 5, 1921. 13 deputies voted against to this decision. The chairman requested that these opponents support the act in the open session to show the unity of the Grand National Assembly against external enemies. In the open session, the act was accepted unanimously by the votes of 184 deputies on August 5, 1921. Mustafa Kemal Pasha would be the single authority in legislative, executive, and judicial matters. After the decision was taken by the Grand National Assembly, Mustafa Kemal showed his thanks to the Assembly. In his speech, Mustafa Kemal aimed to convince deputies of the victory of Turkish armies. He said that he needed the protection of the Assembly and the support of the Turkish people to achieve his goals. After Mustafa Kemal's speech Kemalist deputies started to praise him. Seref Bey, deputy of Edirne, underlined the importance of this decision and said that Mustafa Kemal was the greatest leader of the greatest nation. He believed that Mustafa Kemal would save the state and his name would be written in history. Muhiddin Baha Bey, a Kemalist deputy of Bursa, exalted Mustafa Kemal's personality, declaring "our hope is dependent upon your great ability which was shining in the past."¹⁵⁶

Kinross and Orga indicate that the Supreme Commander Act of 1921 enabled Mustafa Kemal to be a military dictator for the next three months.¹⁵⁷ Besides, this law is seen as "a revolutionary step" by Gawrych. According to the old Ottoman constitution, the sultan was the

¹⁵⁶ *TBMM ZC*, 5 Aug. 1921, v. 12, 18-20.

¹⁵⁷ Kinross, *Ataturk*, 311. Orga, *Phoenix Ascendant*, 106.

commander in chief, but, this new law gave Mustafa Kemal as commander in chief the authority to make decisions in the name of Parliament on matters related to the military.¹⁵⁸

After Mustafa Kemal used this extraordinary power in the military matters in three months, the first extension of the Supreme Commander Act for another three months was accepted on October 31, 1921. Mufid Efendi, deputy of Kirsehir who later joined to the Second Group in 1922, gave a proposal, which offered to extend the act, to the Grand National Assembly on October 30, 1921. The proposal was discussed in the Assembly the next day. In the discussions Kemalist deputies emphasized the importance of the act, which had proven effective both militarily and politically during the War of Independence. The mission had not accomplished yet and the act should be extended according to Mufid Efendi. Husrev Bey, a close associates of Mustafa Kemal and deputy of Trabzon, emphasized that the military situation was not different than the period when the act was accepted in August 1921. According to him until the decisive victory against to the enemies, the discussion about abandoning this act was unnecessary. Tunali Hilmi Bey, pro-Kemalist deputy of Bolu, indicated that this act affected people very positively when it was accepted. According to him, this act should be extended without discussion. Mustafa Durak Bey, deputy of Erzurum, was also in favor of this extension until the victory of War of Independence would be realized. Musa Kazim Efendi, Kemalist deputy of Konya, and Abdullah Azmi Efendi, another Kemalist deputy of Eskisehir, underlined the troubles of war were still continuing, therefore until the victory this extension had to be accepted by the Assembly.¹⁵⁹

The main objection from the opponents to this act was that it entrusted full powers to a single authority. While, the opposition was agreed on the importance of this act during the war,

¹⁵⁸ Gawrych, *Young Ataturk*, 152-155.

¹⁵⁹ *TBMM ZC (secret session)*, 31 Oct. 1921, v. 2, 413-417.

the opponents thought that giving all authority to a person was a danger for a nation. Huseyin Avni Bey, deputy of Erzurum and future leader of the Second Group in July 1922, conceded the successes of this act until that time. He indicated that Mustafa Kemal accomplished his military goals by the help of this act. After that time, however, he had to return back to the Assembly to his office of Presidency. Necip Bey, deputy of Ertugrul who was a member of opposition group, indicated that he was against giving the full powers of the Assembly to Mustafa Kemal.¹⁶⁰ After these discussions, the extension of the act was voted by the deputies. While 12 deputies¹⁶¹ were against, 152 voted for the extension of the Supreme Commander Act.¹⁶²

After the first extension of the Supreme Commander Act in October 1921, another struggle between the Kemalist majority and its opposition started in November 1921 in the subject of form of government. On November 24, 1921, the Grand National Assembly began to discuss the duties and authorities of the government. The report of the Special Commission, which was established in January 1921, was read in the Assembly the same day. As the official author of this report Selahaddin Bey underlined that after accepting this proposal, the legislative authority of the cabinet would be clearer. First of all, the head of Government would set forth his program to the Assembly and this program would be approved by the Assembly. After that, the activities of the Government would be supervised by the President of the Assembly. If there would be some misdeeds against

¹⁶⁰ *TBMM ZC (secret session)*, 31 Oct. 1921, v. 2, 413-418.

¹⁶¹ The 12 deputies who voted against this act were Yusuf Ziya Bey (deputy of Bitlis), Hasan Hayri Bey (deputy of Dersim), Huseyin Avni Bey (deputy of Erzurum), Haydar Lutfi Bey (deputy of Icel), Sami Bey (deputy of Icel), Fuat Bey (deputy of Izmit), Hulusi Bey (deputy of Karahisar-i Sahib), Abidin Bey (deputy of Lazistan), Huseyin Husnu Bey (deputy of Mersin), Ismail Safa Bey (deputy of Mersin), Muhtar Fikri Bey (deputy of Mersin) and Hakki Hami Bey (deputy of Sinop). Except Ismail Safa Bey and Huseyin Husnu Bey, the rest of ten deputies would later join to the Second Group in the Assembly.

¹⁶² *TBMM ZC (secret session)*, 31 Oct. 1921, v. 2, 430-431.

the authority of the Assembly, the president would have to protect the rights of the Assembly.¹⁶³ Moreover, Selahaddin Bey pointed out the differences between unity of powers and separation of powers in his speech. According to him the essence of unity of power was absolute despotism. Today, the example of absolutism and despotism was unity of powers. The ruler could do whatever he wanted with the help of unity of powers. Therefore, Selahaddin Bey and his friends aimed to stop the negative effects of this situation by accepting this proposal.¹⁶⁴

One of the negative effects of unity of powers was the extreme power of a person could be dangerous for the future of the country. Hasan Hayri Bey, deputy of Dersim who later joined to the opposition group, expressed this possibility by giving a common example. In his speech Hasan Hayri Bey mentioned the fate of Enver Pasha, who was the responsible for the defeat of the Ottoman armies in World War I. Enver Pasha had unlimited powers and the destiny of the Ottoman Empire was in his hands during World War I. At that time, giving unlimited powers to him was a mistake. Hasan Hayri Bey warned the other deputies as: “if we want Mustafa Kemal to fall into the same fate, let’s give him the same powers.” While Hasan Bey wanted to prevent Mustafa Kemal from this negative possibility, Mustafa Kemal responded to him harshly as not comparing him with Enver Pasha.¹⁶⁵

The lack of a clear model of government was another concern for the opposition. Necati Bey, a member of Second Group and deputy of Erzurum, mentioned this concern in his speech. He pointed out that, they – MPs- had to think about the future not only for daily issues. Necati Bey commented that the form of government did not satisfy the national will so far. The enemies of

¹⁶³ *TBMM ZC*, 24 Nov. 1921, v. 14, 326-327.

¹⁶⁴ *TBMM ZC*, 24 Nov. 1921, v. 14, 328.

¹⁶⁵ *TBMM ZC*, 26 Nov. 1921, v. 14, 345.

Turkish people could blame the Assembly in future as “you established a personal government instead of national government in Anatolia.” Therefore, the Grand National Assembly had to alter the form of government.¹⁶⁶

Yusuf Ziya Bey, deputy of Bitlis and later a prominent figure of Second Group, was in favor of the bill. He thought that this bill was a successful step on the way of determining basic laws. He thought that this bill was a necessary for the future governments in the Assembly. If the Assembly did not make clear the duties and responsibilities of the next government, they would be like “ships without compasses.” Moreover, he indicated the lack of written programs and laws which determined the duties of both deputies and the governments. Therefore, that lack should be completed immediately. This bill, which was discussed in the Assembly, would be a positive step according to him.¹⁶⁷

The notion of separations of powers was not welcome to the Kemalist majority in the Assembly. Zekai Bey, a prominent Kemalist deputy of Adana, voiced the Kemalist thesis in this issue that separation of powers was a hindrance to the unity of national will. According to him, this theory had been discussed from nineteenth century by the constitutionalists and it had many flaws. Therefore, this decayed thought would not be a remedy for the future of the country. Zekai Bey criticized Selahaddin Bey’s proposal as aiming to establish a Council of Ministers which was not proper for the Constitution. He referred to the thought of Montesquieu in this subject also. According to him, the main thing should be the balance of powers instead of separation of powers. If one of these branches of power dominated the others, it would be a problem.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁶ *TBMM ZC*, 28 Nov. 1921, v. 14, 377.

¹⁶⁷ *TBMM ZC*, 29 Nov. 1921, v.14, 396-399.

¹⁶⁸ *TBMM ZC*, 26 Nov. 1921, v. 14, 355-357.

Mahmud Esad Bey, a close associate of Mustafa Kemal and deputy of Izmir who later became Minister of Justice in 1926, was also against separation of powers. He mentioned the practices which were put into effect by different nations. He mostly focused on the American system which was accepted the separation of powers. He indicated that Woodrow Wilson, the President of US, complained about the negative effects of the separation of powers. According to Wilson, the Constitution of US caused the division of the general authority of Government into small parts. Each branch of Government had a tiny responsibility and each of them looked for an escape from responsibility. Moreover, they blamed each other because of avoiding responsibility. Beyond the US, Mahmud Esad Bey thought that the separation of powers an obstacle for South American states. He brought up the Mexican example. He asserted that the reason for military coup d'états in Mexico was the separation of powers. Mahmud Esad Bey did not believe that the separation of powers was suitable for the Turkish society. He warned the rest of MPs as if they wanted to achieve liberty and national sovereignty they should not separate the powers but unite them.¹⁶⁹

The possibility of a parliamentary system was another point of Kemalist objection in this bill. Behcet Bey, pro-Kemalist deputy of Kangiri, indicated that the bill aimed to establish a parliamentary regime which was not favorable for the Turkish nation at that time. He underlined that the Assembly did not need to search a form of Government. The main goal was to rescue the Turkish land which was determined by the National Pact. Moreover Behcet Bey mentioned the differences between Western and Eastern societies. According to him, it would be impossible to carry out a Western form of Government, especially “a deformed form”, in Turkey.¹⁷⁰ From his

¹⁶⁹ *TBMM ZC*, 28 Nov. 1921, v. 14, 377-381.

¹⁷⁰ *TBMM ZC*, 29 Nov. 1921, v. 14, 395-396.

perspective, the parliamentary system was interpreted as a deformed Western system, which would not be suitable for the Turkish society which was an Eastern one.

Mustafa Kemal's thoughts about unity of power give us some details about his desire to establish an autocratic state under his leadership. Unity of powers was indispensable for Mustafa Kemal because of his desire to control all power in his hands. As a military leader in his background, Mustafa Kemal knew the importance of controlling discipline and powers in a center. Therefore, the separation of powers would not be favorable for his future plans. In his speech in the Assembly on December 1, 1921, Mustafa Kemal declared that "there was not separation of powers in reality, in nature, and in universe."¹⁷¹

In his speech Mustafa Kemal gave the details of his preference with regard to the separation of powers. He mentioned that he scrutinized many works of intellectuals who were concerned about delimiting the power of absolute rulers. According to Mustafa Kemal, most of these philosophers were distressed because of not achieving their goals in delimiting the power of rulers. Mustafa Kemal referred the notion of separation of powers to Jean Jacques Rousseau in this speech. He ridiculed the French political philosopher without providing any explanation.¹⁷² He expressed his thoughts about Rousseau as: "Read the works of Jean Jacques Rousseau from beginning to end. When I read this, I have realized two essences which I believe apparent in this author. One of them is grief and the other is insanity. I was curious about this special case of this author. I realized that this man was insane and he wrote his book in a state of insanity. Therefore, the theory which we were based on mostly was a product of this mentality."¹⁷³ Mustafa Kemal

¹⁷¹ *TBMM ZC*, 1 Dec. 1921, v. 14, 436-437.

¹⁷² Gawrych, *Young Atatürk*, 179.

¹⁷³ *TBMM ZC*, 1 Dec. 1921, v. 14, 440.

was mistaken: the separation of powers is not the principle of Rousseau, but instead belongs to Montesquieu. In this case, can we say Mustafa Kemal did not know the principle very well? It is unlikely. In the Atatürk Library, there are books which Mustafa Kemal read before. Mustafa Kemal took notes on Rousseau's *The Social Contract*. One of these notes related to power and sovereignty. Mustafa Kemal underlined the sentence "the power of sovereignty is simple and unique; to divide this power means to destroy it" as "important."¹⁷⁴ In this case, did Mustafa Kemal make a mistake when he referred to Rousseau? It is unlikely again. Mustafa Kemal knew both authors very well and he referred Rousseau's personal situation as insane and distressed. Mustafa Kemal distorted the importance of separation of powers which was contrary to his interests at that time. His personal autocracy would be in conflict with the notion of separation of powers and he aimed to discredit this principle. After these discussions, the proposal was sent back to the Special commission by the Assembly.¹⁷⁵ The Kemalist majority in the Assembly accepted to continue unity of powers in the administration. This decision enabled the establishment of an autocracy which lasted until the end of World War II in Turkey.

The second extension of the Supreme Commander Act, which was accepted on February 4, 1922, was another discussion subject between the Kemalist majority and the opposition.¹⁷⁶ Ferid Bey, another Kemalist deputy of Çorum, and his 43 companions proposed to the Assembly on January 31, 1922, the extension of the act for another three months. This proposal was discussed in the Assembly on February 2, 1922, for the first time. At that time, there was not a lot of

¹⁷⁴ Recep Cengiz, *Atatürk'ün Okuduğu Kitaplar* [The Books Which Atatürk Read], (Ankara: Anıtkabir Derneği Yayınları, 2001), 73.

¹⁷⁵ *TBMM ZC*, 3 Dec. 1921, v. 15, 4-5.

¹⁷⁶ "Baskumandanimizin Temdid Muddeti" [The Extension Period of our Supreme Commander], *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, 5 Feb. 1922, 1.

discussions about this extension. Only Huseyin Avni Bey showed his dissatisfaction about this extension. According to him, the foreigners wanted to decrease the value of the national movement by saying the personal desire of Mustafa Kemal was sovereign instead of the national sovereignty in Turkey. He emphasized that after the acceptance of the Supreme Commander Act, the Assembly accepted Mustafa Kemal as the leader of the national movement. However, by accepting this act Mustafa Kemal was entrusted with this duty by the Assembly. Therefore, this Assembly could appoint someone as a Supreme Commander, or as a Marshal, or even a private soldier.¹⁷⁷ Huseyin Avni Bey argued for the supremacy of the Assembly over any personality by this statement.

When the extension of the act was discussed in the Assembly on February 4, 1922, the opposition proposed a change to the second article of the act. Mustafa Bey, deputy of Karahisar-i Sarki who later joined to the Second Group, emphasized the importance of the second article in this act. In his proposal, Mustafa Bey pointed out that the Assembly could lift the authority of Mustafa Kemal if it deemed necessary. According to him, he did not oppose Mustafa Kemal as a Supreme Commander but he thought that it was not legal to give entire power to Mustafa Kemal. Selahaddin Bey, deputy of Mersin and a prominent opponent, supported this proposal also. He emphasized that this new proposal could provide the same benefits as the original proposal, given by Ferid Bey. Moreover, Selahaddin Bey indicated that this new proposal was better because it did not have any restriction of the Assembly's power. According to him, the present situation was not so bad as to justify giving any extraordinary authority to anyone.¹⁷⁸ From his perspective, the opponents were well aware of not giving the rights of the Assembly to any person. However, the President of the Assembly opted for Ferid Bey's proposal and sent the opponents' proposal to the

¹⁷⁷ TBMM ZC (*secret session*), 2 Feb. 1922, v. 2, 675- 676.

¹⁷⁸ TBMM ZC, 4 Feb. 1922, v. 16, 202- 203.

commission of petition (*layiha encumeni*). The opponents rejected this decision that “this proposal was accepted by force” and “despotism of the presidency.” After these discussion, the President of the Assembly asked to the deputies to accept or reject the extension of the Supreme Commander Act for another three months by raising their hands. While, the opposition rejected this method, the extension was accepted by the majority of the Grand National Assembly.¹⁷⁹

The third extension of the Supreme Commander Act was accepted on May 6, 1922.¹⁸⁰ Husrev Bey, deputy of Trabzon, and his 15 colleagues gave a proposal for another extension of this act to the Assembly. When this proposal was read in the Assembly, the Kemalist deputies wanted this proposal to be discussed in secret session, but the opponents rejected a secret session. Huseyin Avni Bey questioned the meaning of discussion about an overt act in a secret session. He emphasized that the Assembly gave its authority to a person by the help of this Supreme Commander Act. Huseyin Avni Bey asked the Kemalist deputies if it was forbidden to speak out against this act. He declared openly that he would talk about in which conditions the Assembly could leave or not leave some of its rights. Selahaddin Bey and Ziya Hursit Bey agreed with him that discussion in a secret session was unnecessary.¹⁸¹

The opposition showed their hostility to the extension of this act once more in these debates. One reason for this rejection was that the wartime circumstances were better than they were in August 1921, when this act was accepted the first time. Ali Sukru Bey, deputy of Trabzon who was later killed by Topal Osman Agha the commander of Mustafa Kemal's special Bodyguard Regiment in 1923, emphasized the positive conditions of the state in the new period and declared

¹⁷⁹ *TBMM ZC*, 4 Feb. 1922, v. 16, 204.

¹⁸⁰ Orga, *Phoenix Ascendant*, 115.

¹⁸¹ *TBMM ZC (secret session)*, 4 May 1922, v. 3, 310.

that the Assembly should take its rights back. Selahaddin Bey also referred to the better conditions of the state. According to him, Mustafa Kemal should return to his Presidency in the Assembly and leave his position to other commanders in the army.¹⁸²

The opposition was very reluctant to give the rights of the Assembly to any person and their voice was very strong in this issue during the third extension of the Supreme Commander Act. Huseyin Avni Bey expressed the importance of the legislative and executive rights of the Assembly. He pointed out that he did not see any person as superior to the Assembly. Huseyin Avni Bey warned the other deputies to keep and not transfer their rights, which were given by people to them, to an individual person.¹⁸³

The Kemalist deputies were somewhat defensive during these discussions. They tried to show the critical situation of the state was still on going. Therefore, this extension should be accepted without any change. According to Rauf Bey, the Prime Minister at that time, removing of the second article in this act would show distrustfulness to Mustafa Kemal who governed the entire army. This distrustfulness would cause many negative effects at home and abroad. Muhittin Baha Bey also agreed with Rauf Bey. If the powers granted in this act would be decreased, this situation would cause many problems.¹⁸⁴

After these debates, Selahaddin Bey and 15 of his colleagues gave a proposal to eliminate the second article in the Supreme Commander Act. After the voting, 73 deputies agreed to eliminate it, 91 deputies were in favor of maintaining the authority to Mustafa Kemal, and 12 deputies abstained.¹⁸⁵ The proposal of the extension of the act was postponed on May 6, 1922.

¹⁸² TBMM ZC (*secret session*), 4 May 1922, v. 3, 311-316.

¹⁸³ TBMM ZC (*secret session*), 4 May 1922, v. 3, 316-317.

¹⁸⁴ TBMM ZC (*secret session*), 4 May 1922, v. 3, 317-321.

¹⁸⁵ TBMM ZC (*secret session*), 4 May 1922, v. 3, 329.

While the opposition could not eliminate the second article at that day, this situation was a victory for them. The Kemalist majority encountered a great threat on May 4, 1922, and the authority of Mustafa Kemal was shaken by a united opposition.

The strong objection to the extension of the Supreme Commander Act forced Mustafa Kemal to explain the situation and convince his opponents. Therefore, he gathered the Assembly in a secret session on May 6, 1922.¹⁸⁶ First of all Mustafa Kemal stated that he could not join the last session because of his illness. He reviewed all statements of his opponents and he examined all of the votes. Mustafa Kemal assured the Assembly that he was not in favor of continuing a position which was unnecessary. He rejected the idea he was infringing on the Assembly's rights and declared that he did not ask anyone to appoint him as the Supreme Commander or gave all these powers to him. Mustafa Kemal underlined that he accepted this position because of the deputies' statement, which was "there was no other solution." Therefore, he had never thought to seize the rights of the Assembly partially or completely.¹⁸⁷

Mustafa Kemal evaluated the situation as a military issue instead of a parliamentary issue. The objection of the opposition, which was the Supreme Commander Act was unnecessary at that time because of a better situation at the front, was interpreted by Mustafa Kemal as helping to weaken the military. He accused the opposition of making decisions which were not based on any reality. The extension of the act was rejected before its term was over. Therefore he was commanding the army without any legal authority. Mustafa Kemal asked to the Assembly if the army should be without any commander. He answered his own question as: "I cannot leave and I will not leave the commandership." Mustafa Kemal wanted to stop this anarchy in the Assembly

¹⁸⁶ Gawrych, *Young Atatürk*, 186.

¹⁸⁷ *TBMM ZC (secret session)*, 6 May 1922, v. 3, 335.

as soon as possible, because of the continuing difficult circumstances which had not changed. He tried to reassure the deputies about their doubts in the second article of the act. According to him, this article was legal. The Assembly did not transfer its rights to the Supreme Commander, but only strengthened the military by the help of this act.¹⁸⁸ After Mustafa Kemal's speech, the extension of the act was voted by the deputies. In the end, the Grand National Assembly renewed Mustafa Kemal's mandate, with 177 votes for, 11 against, and 15 abstentions.¹⁸⁹ Mustafa Kemal's speech and his strong determination about not leaving the commandership was very effective on the decision of the deputies. While two days before this speech, the opposition showed a great resistance against to the second article of the act. However, the appearance of Mustafa Kemal in the Assembly gave a great confidence to the Kemalist majority and they managed to extend the act another three months.

The last extension of the Supreme Commander Act was accepted on July 20, 1922.¹⁹⁰ While the first three extensions were limited to a three-month period, this extension was accepted indefinitely. Refik Bey, a close associates of Mustafa Kemal and deputy of Bayazid, and Emin Bey, another pro-Kemalist deputy of Bursa, gave a proposal to the Assembly for extending the act for another three months on July 20, 1922. This time, the act was not discussed much in the Assembly. First of all Mustafa Kemal Pasha explained the reasons when this act was accepted first time in August 1921. According to him, when the military situation was in crisis, the Assembly gave most of its rights to him. There were two reasons behind this decision. One of them was the extraordinary situation of the state. The second reason was the great confidence of the Assembly

¹⁸⁸ *TBMM ZC (secret session)*, 6 May 1922, v. 3, 341-350.

¹⁸⁹ *TBMM ZC*, 6 May 1922, v. 19, 528. Gawrych, *Young Ataturk*, 187.

¹⁹⁰ Gawrych, *Young Ataturk*, 188.

to Mustafa Kemal. He thanked to the deputies for their great trust in him. After one year Mustafa Kemal pointed out that the situation of the army was in a great condition, Therefore, there was no need to continue this title.¹⁹¹

While Mustafa Kemal did not show any interest in continuing the title of Supreme Commander, the Kemalist deputies gave another proposal for another extension. Ali Riza Bey, pro-Kemalist deputy of Istanbul, gave another proposal to the Assembly which emphasized that the Supreme Command was a necessity to defeat the state's enemies. According to him, until the final victory, Mustafa Kemal should hold the title of Supreme Commander. Moreover, this title could not be restricted with a limited time. According to Ali Riza Bey's proposal, Mustafa Kemal would be the Supreme Commander until the end of the war, and the second article would be changed so that the Assembly could take back this title from Mustafa Kemal whenever it wanted. The opposition agreed with this decision also. Durak Bey indicated that Mustafa Kemal should be the Supreme Commander until victory. He pointed out that someone had to take the responsibility of the military during this critical period. If the Assembly took back this authority from Mustafa Kemal Pasha, he could say "you took back my authority when I was on the verge of the victory", if something was going wrong. To eliminate this possibility, Mustafa Kemal should continue his duty until the end of the war.¹⁹²

In conclusion, the unity of power is the assemblage of legislative, executive, and judicial branches of power in the hands of a single person or an institution. While this notion is contrary to democracy, Mustafa Kemal was a great admirer of this idea. At the early stage of the Grand National Assembly he supported unity of power as the most ideal system. According to him, it was

¹⁹¹ *TBMM ZC*, 20 Jul. 1922, v. 21, 430-431.

¹⁹² *TBMM ZC*, 20 Jul. 1922, v. 21, 435.

superior to the rest of the systems by the developed nations.¹⁹³ The Assembly debates prove that the opposition underlined that the essence of unity of powers was absolute despotism. According to them, the example of absolutism and despotism was unity of power. One of the negative effects of unity of power was the extreme power of a person could be dangerous for the future of the country. On the contrary, the notion of separations of powers was not welcome to the Kemalist majority in the Assembly. Moreover, Mustafa Kemal rejected the separation of power as “there was not separation of powers in reality, in nature, and in universe.”¹⁹⁴ By the help of unity of power, Mustafa Kemal continued to centralize fill power in his hands.

The Supreme Commander Act of 1921 was another critical event on the way of Kemalist autocracy. Mustafa Kemal expanded his power in the state after obtaining the entire authority of the Grand National Assembly in his hands. As a highly confident person, Mustafa Kemal convinced the majority in the Assembly that only he could save the nation. After his close associates’ initiative to give full power to him, Mustafa Kemal played his cards very well to keep his title of Supreme Commander until the end of the war, while the opposition remarked against leaving their rights to a single authority. The Assembly debates proved that the opposition to the Kemalist majority in the Assembly, adamantly rejected any kind of personal autocracy and military dictatorship during these discussions. In every extension, opponents showed their dissatisfaction with giving an unlimited authority to Mustafa Kemal by this act.

¹⁹³ Afet Inan, *Ataturk Hakkinda Hatiralar ve Belgeler [Memories and Documents about Ataturk]*, (Istanbul: Turkiye Is Bankasi Yayinlari, 2011), 75.

¹⁹⁴ *TBMM ZC*, 1 Dec. 1921, v. 14, 436-437.

2.2 Abolition of the Ottoman Sultanate

Kemalist attitudes toward to the last Sultan of the Ottoman Dynasty changed during the Turkish War of Independence from 1919 to 1922. Initially, Mustafa Kemal and his followers maintained good relations with the Sultan and the Court. When the National Assembly was inaugurated in April 1920, Kemalists declared their aim as rescuing the Sultan and Caliph from the captivity of the foreign yoke. But after the military victories at Inonu in January and April 1921, and the Treaty of Moscow in March 1921 Mustafa Kemal's position was stronger, and the Kemalists started to criticize Sultan Mehmed VI as "a coward who was the puppet of the invaders" in mid-1921. After the Kemalist victories against the Greeks in western of Turkey in September 1922, Mustafa Kemal gained a great reputation and this reputation enabled him to consolidate his power against the Istanbul Government. Thus, the Kemalists launched a massive attack on the Sultan as "a traitor and degenerate man" who had to leave his position forever at the third and last stage.

As an opportunist, Mustafa Kemal eliminated one of his rivals by abolishing the Sultanate. After the end of the Ottoman Sultanate, Mustafa Kemal separated the Caliphate from the Sultanate. The main goal for him was to divide religious authority from state affairs. Controlling the Caliphate under the protection of National Assembly would increase the power of Mustafa Kemal. His next steps would be the establishment of Turkish Republic in October 1923, and the abolition of the Ottoman Caliphate in March 1924. After these attempts, Mustafa Kemal would manage to dismiss the religious authority from the political structure of Turkey and establish his personal autocracy in a secular way. This section demonstrates these Kemalist actions by using the records of the Assembly debates and periodicals.

2.2.1 The Ottoman Empire and Kemalists' Loyalty to the Sultan at the First Stage of the Turkish War of Independence: A Captive Sultan

The Ottoman Empire was essentially a theocratic state in where religion was more important phenomenon than language or ethnic lines in determining identity. The Sultan embodied the leadership of the Islamic world as Caliph, as well as being temporal ruler of the Ottoman Empire. From this perspective, the Ottoman Sultan was seen as the shadow of God upon Earth, with whom all creatures seek shelter. Moreover he was perceived by them more as a protector than an overlord.¹⁹⁵ These ordinary people, mostly peasants, raised with this patriarchal traditions and could not imagine a country without its Sultan. Not only these peasants could not break this tie easily but also many adherents of the Young Turks of the 1908 Revolution who had a tradition of a constitutional monarchy.¹⁹⁶

Sultan Mehmed VI was the thirty-sixth and the last Sultan of the Ottoman Empire, reigning from 1918 to 1922. Mehmet VI pursued a passive policy when Istanbul and parts of Anatolia were being invaded by the Allied powers following World War I. While he adopted a stance of cooperation with the conditions of the armistice in order to gain a reasonable peace settlement, on August 10, 1920, under the Treaty of Sevres, the bulk of the remaining Ottoman lands were divided up among the Allied powers, and his attitude did not change against the invaders.¹⁹⁷

The attitude of Mustafa Kemal and his companions toward Sultan Mehmed VI was positive at this early stage of the Independence War. In the Erzurum Congress in July 1919, the resistance movement under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal declared that the congress acted directly in the

¹⁹⁵ Bernard Lewis, *The Political Language of Islam*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 22. Braude and Lewis, *Christians and Jews*, 28.

¹⁹⁶ Price, *A History of Turkey*, 127.

¹⁹⁷ Heper, *Historical Dictionary*, 131. Howard, *History of Turkey*, 84.

sultan's service, asking for God's aid not only in destroying their enemies, but also in "preserving the Sultan and Caliph of the Muslims, the Sultan Mehmet VI."¹⁹⁸ The British occupation of Istanbul and closure of the last Ottoman Parliament enabled Mustafa Kemal and his associates to organize a new Assembly in Ankara.¹⁹⁹ As an opportunist and a pragmatist leader Mustafa Kemal decided to take advantage of the religious feelings of the people for getting popular support. He issued a proclamation on April 21, 1920, in which he stated that the opening of the assembly would take place on Friday, April 23, a holy day in Islam. Mustafa Kemal participated in these prayers, and his praying made for an excellent photograph for propaganda purposes later.²⁰⁰ When the Assembly was inaugurated on April 23, 1920, the Kemalists were establishing contact and coming to a conciliation with the sultan-caliph.²⁰¹ They showed their loyalty to Sultan Mehmed VI when the Assembly was inaugurated. In the opening ceremony of the Grand National Assembly the interim president Serif Bey, deputy of Sinop and a close friend of Mustafa Kemal, uttered his feelings as: "I pray God to give us successes in rescuing Sultan Mehmed VI, who is the Caliph of all Muslims and the Sultan of all Ottomans; from the restrictions of foreigners and freeing Istanbul, which is our dear capital forever, from the occupation of the Allies; and for saving all of our cities which were annihilating by the occupiers under the great atrocities."²⁰²

The following day Mustafa Kemal summarized the general feeling of their movement in the Assembly. He pointed out that the only way to rescue the state and Sultan was the collaboration

¹⁹⁸ Fahreddin Kirzioglu, *Butunuytle Erzurum Kongresi [The Erzurum Congress Completely]*, (Ankara: Kultur Ofset, 1993), 236-237.

¹⁹⁹ Kalaycioglu, *Turkish Dynamics*, 38.

²⁰⁰ Gawrych, *Young Ataturk*, 104. Tamkoc, *The Warrior Diplomats*, 84.

²⁰¹ Berkes, *Development of Secularism*, 444.

²⁰² TBMM ZC, 23 Apr. 1920, v.1. 1.

of all patriots and intellectuals who were deeply upset because of the occupation of state, a horrible situation for the people of the Ottoman Empire.²⁰³ Mustafa Kemal expressed his loyalty to the Sultan as: “I display and assure to be loyal forever to the Caliphate and Sultanate until the last day of my life with a great obedience. I pray God to rescue the Sultan from all of the disasters and pray for his health.”²⁰⁴ Moreover, Mustafa Kemal declared his hopes for future as seeing Sultan Mehmed VI as free and independent from the yoke of the Allies. After his salvation, Sultan Mehmed VI would take his position which would be set right by the Grand National Assembly.²⁰⁵ From this perspective, Mustafa Kemal considered that Sultan Mehmed VI would keep his position should the War of Independence would be successful. This was a general belief of the deputies at the early days of the National Assembly.

While the Ankara GNA aimed to rescue and restore the Istanbul government, the position of the Sultan and his government after the salvation of the state caused some suspicions among citizens in Istanbul. Opening another Assembly in Ankara and forming a government which was led by Mustafa Kemal were the main suspicions for people in the capital city. Beyond Mustafa Kemal’s speech, Muhiddin Baha Bey tried to eliminate all doubt about establishing another government in Ankara. According to him, the real government for the members of National Assembly was in Istanbul. The Office of Sultanate and Caliphate conducted the government in Istanbul. In his speech Muhiddin Baha Bey expressed the real situation for the new Assembly as: “we do not constitute a new government. Our committee is a national committee which aims to rescue the Government in Istanbul which was under the captivity and to defend and protect its

²⁰³ *TBMM ZC*, 24 Apr. 1920, v.1, 8.

²⁰⁴ *TBMM ZC*, 24 Apr. 1920, v.1, 16.

²⁰⁵ *TBMM ZC*, 24 Apr. 1920, v.1, 31.

rights instead of to constitute a new one. Therefore, there is no reason to mention about constituting a new government. The individuals of people, who gathered in Assembly, will carry out their duties to defend the rights of Turkish people in the name of them.”²⁰⁶ Muhiddin Baha did not agree with to denominate the interim government which was constituted for a while.

In these days, a letter was written to the Sultan by the members of the Turkish Grand National Assembly. In this letter, the general condition of Anatolia was elucidated and the members of the Assembly proclaimed their loyalty to the Sultan Mehmed VI.²⁰⁷ Hamdullah Suphi Bey, an influential writer, rhetorician, and politician in the early period of the Republican era and deputy of Istanbul in the first period of Assembly, expressed the greatness of this loyalty as these sentences: “O our Padishah. We are gathering around your throne to be bonded tighter and excessively with our hearts which are filled with loyalty and obedience to you. The first word of this Assembly was to be loyal to Sultan and Caliph and last word will be the same.”²⁰⁸ Beyond this letter, there was an act, related to the form of oath, accepted by the members of Assembly. In this oath, the members of Grand National Assembly had to say: “I say ‘Vallahi’²⁰⁹ I will not follow any other goal except the salvation and freedom of Caliphate, Sultanate, country, and nation.”²¹⁰ Moreover, in the first draft of the new constitution, the loyalty to Sultan was underlined in the first article as “the Grand National Assembly was formed as to pursue the goals of living independently in its national borders and rescuing the Office of Sultanate and Caliphate.”²¹¹

²⁰⁶ *TBMM ZC*, 25 Apr. 1920, v.1, 55.

²⁰⁷ The letter was written on April 27, 1920.

²⁰⁸ *TBMM ZC*, 28 Apr. 1920, v.1, 124.

²⁰⁹ It means upon my word in a very religious sense as God is witness.

²¹⁰ *TBMM ZC*, 6 Jul. 1920, v.2, 203.

²¹¹ *TBMM ZC*, 18 Sep. 1920, v.4, 201-202.

The deputies expressed their loyalty to the Sultanate with very sincere speeches in the Assembly. Ihsan Bey, one of the pro-Kemalist deputies of Cebelibereket, exalted the Office of Sultanate as source of pride for not only the Turkish nation but also for entire Muslim World. He underlined that the main goal for the Assembly was not to control the Government but to resist enemies, who had hostile attitudes towards to the Sultanate and the freedom of Ottoman people.²¹² In the discussions of the budget of the Government, Ferit Bey, the Minister of Finance, mentioned the appropriation for the Sultanate. More than five-hundred thousand Turkish liras would be given to the Office of Sultanate as gratitude of the Assembly. Ferit Bey indicated that the Sultan was under captivity in Istanbul, but whenever he would be free he would get his position again in Ottoman society.²¹³

Mustafa Kemal and his allies seemed more loyalist rather than their opponents in this period of the Assembly. When Huseyin Avni Bey, deputy of Erzurum and the prominent member of the Second Group, raised the authority of the Assembly in the execution of capital punishments, which were the prerogative of the Sultan. Mustafa Kemal rejected these issues as untimely. He underlined that the Assembly accepted the Office of Sultanate and Caliphate in principle. Mustafa Kemal declared the rights and authorities of Sultan were required by the Islamic law and the tradition of state. On contrary, Huseyin Avni Bey pointed that the Grand National Assembly had all the authorities of Sultanate in its powers and would determine the entire authority of the Sultan in future.²¹⁴

²¹² *TBMM ZC*, 8 Sep. 1920, v. 4, 32.

²¹³ *TBMM ZC*, 30 Sep. 1920, v. 4, 452.

²¹⁴ *TBMM ZC*, 20 Jan. 1921, v. 7, 331-332.

The invitation of the Ankara Government to the Conference of London in February 1921 caused another debate between Kemalist deputies and the opposition. When the British Government invited the Istanbul Government to peace talks, Mustafa Kemal sent a telegram to Tewfik Pasha, the head of Istanbul Government, to unite the national forces. In his telegram, Mustafa Kemal showed his respect to the Office of Sultanate and Caliphate once more. To continue this respect, Mustafa Kemal asked Tewfik Pasha to ensure Sultan Mehmed Vahideddin would accept the Grand National Assembly was the only representative of the national will.²¹⁵ Huseyin Avni Bey criticized Mustafa Kemal's telegram to the Istanbul Government as a case of appropriation of the Office of Sultanate. According to Huseyin Avni Bey, Mustafa Kemal agreed to give an appropriation to the Sultan in return for his acceptance of the Ankara Government. Huseyin Avni Bey thought about this attitude as incorrect and ugly.²¹⁶

Mustafa Kemal and his allies had a positive attitude towards to the Sultanate from May 1919 to April 1921. After April 1921, however, members of the National Assembly started their attack directly to the person of Sultan Mehmed VI, especially after the Second Battle of Inonu in March 1921 gave more credit to the Ankara Government. After this victory, Mustafa Kemal blamed the Sultan with harsh words, such as a coward and puppet of the invaders. This period was the second stage of the relationships between the Ottoman Sultan in Istanbul and the Kemalist leadership in Ankara.

²¹⁵ *TBMM ZC*, 29 Jan. 1921, v. 7, 411-412.

²¹⁶ *TBMM ZC*, 31 Jan. 1921, v. 8, 22.

2.2.2 First Reactions Against to the Personality of the Sultan: A Coward Sultan who was the Puppet of the Invaders

At the end of 1920, Turkish troops became more organized and gained self-confidence in stopping the Greek occupation in the western part of Turkey. In December 1920, the Greeks had advanced on two fronts from Izmir and approached Eskisehir, just 100 kilometers from Ankara. The first Greek offensive was thwarted by the troops under Colonel Ismet Pasha at Inonu on January 10, 1921. This was the regular army's first success in the west.²¹⁷ This victory gave a great confidence to the Kemalist movement. The second battle of Inonu commenced on March 26, 1921. On March 31, the Western command finally broke the Greek offensive and the Greek army forced to retreat back to Bursa. The battle ended where it had started on April 4, 1921. This defensive success was celebrated by the citizens of Ankara and the deputies in the Grand National Assembly. Mustafa Kemal emphasized the importance of this success with inspiring words written to Ismet Pasha: "you have defeated not only the enemy but the ill fortune of our nation."²¹⁸ These victories helped Kemalists to consolidate their power at home and abroad. At home, Kemalists started to consolidate their power against the Sultan and abroad they welcomed Soviet aid for their ultimate goal, to expel enemies from the country. The Assembly debates prove how Kemalist deputies became disrespectful to the authority of Sultan Mehmed VI after these victories.

After the victory of the Turkish army in the Second Battle of Inonu, the prestige and power of Mustafa Kemal increased considerably. At this period, Kemalists started to criticize the Sultan and his government directly. Sultan Mehmed VI was seen as a puppet in the hands of the

²¹⁷ Zurcher, *Turkey*, 153-154. Howard, *History of Turkey*, 88. Butler, *Shadow of the Sultan's Realm*, 227.

²¹⁸ Gawrych, *Young Ataturk*, 140-141.

Entente.²¹⁹ Thus, the image of “captive Sultan”, which was depicted by Kemalists, was destroyed by them after April 1921. Mahmut Celal Bey, pro-Kemalist deputy of Saruhan, summarized the Kemalist notion at that time as: “the current Sultan became a puppet of Robert Frew,²²⁰ who is the agent of Britain.” Neset Bey, another Kemalist deputy of Istanbul, was yelling as “down with the Sultan, he is the same as Frew.”²²¹

Preservation of the dynasty and the maintenance of the seat of the caliphate in Istanbul were the main goals for Sultan Mehmed VI. For realizing these goals, he was willing to cooperate with the Entente as long as the peace treaty being drafted guaranteed the continuance of these institutions.²²² His political maneuvers were described as a selfish attitude by pro-Kemalist deputies at this period. Rasih Effendi, one of the staunch Kemalist deputies from Antalya, criticized Sultan Mehmed VI, Vahideddin, as apathetic to the Greek atrocities against Turkish citizens in western part of Turkey and in Thrace. He blamed the Sultan as a selfish man who cared only for his throne. Sultan Mehmed VI was silent about all these aggressions while he had a responsibility to protect his subjects, the Muslim community. Rasih Effendi also mentioned the insulting attitude of Venizelos’ son, who violated the sacred tomb of Osman Gazi in Bursa. Sultan Mehmed VI could not object to this violation and could not protect his forefather’s tomb. Because of this cowardly attitude of the Sultan, Rasih Effendi called him “Muziriddin”²²³ instead of his

²¹⁹ Jung and Piccoli, *Turkey at the Crossroads*, 63. Butler, *Shadow of the Sultan’s Realm*, 220.

²²⁰ British agent who was a member of “İngiliz Muhibleri Cemiyeti” (the Association of Anglophiles) in Istanbul. The association organized many revolts against the Turkish army during the War of Independence.

²²¹ *TBMM ZC*, 23 Apr. 1921, v. 10, 71.

²²² Yasemin Celik, *Contemporary Turkish Foreign Policy*, (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1999), 27.

²²³ Literally means who is harmful for religion.

name, “Vahideddin.”²²⁴ When Rasih Effendi called the Sultan “Muziriddin”, some of the parliamentarians shouted as “God damned him.”²²⁵

2.2.3 Strong Reactions to the Personality of the Sultan: A Traitor and Degenerated Sultan

Sultan Mehmed VI has been a controversial figure, who has been regarded as a traitor to the national cause by Kemalist historiography.²²⁶ The emergence of this historiography mostly related with Mustafa Kemal’s famous Nutuk (Speech) which was delivered in the Republican People’s Party Congress of 1927. After eliminating all of his opponents, Mustafa Kemal became the sole authority of Turkey in 1926. In this “Nutuk”, Mustafa Kemal criticized almost all of his opponents. Sultan Mehmed VI got his portion from these critics. Mustafa Kemal described him as “degenerated”²²⁷, “traitor”²²⁸, “tool of enemies,”²²⁹ “usurper”,²³⁰ “vile”²³¹ etc. in this speech. This Kemalist discourse has been used for many decades in the all levels of education in Turkey by Kemalist authors. As an example, in one of the school textbook of the fifth grades in 1930, the subject of Sultan Mehmed VI was described as:

The cooperation of the Caliph with the enemies during the War of Independence proved very clearly the uselessness of those authorities. As you know, when the Greek army began to march into the interior of Anatolia by attacking beautiful

²²⁴ Vahideddin means the only one of religion.

²²⁵ TBMM ZC, 9 Jul. 1921, v.11, 208.

²²⁶ Some of secondary sources about this subject of treason: Somel, *Historical Dictionary*, 183. Muammer Kaylan, *The Kemalists: Islamic Revival and the Fate of Secular Turkey*, (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2005), 185. Emre Kongar, *Tarihimizle Yuzlesmek [Face off with Our History]*, (Istanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 2007), 134-140. Dural, *His Story*, 47.

²²⁷ Ataturk, *Nutuk*, 2.

²²⁸ Inan, *Ataturk Hakkinda Hatiralar ve Belgeler*, 134. Ataturk, *Nutuk*, 553.

²²⁹ Ataturk, *Nutuk*, 553.

²³⁰ Ibid, 671.

²³¹ Ibid, 675.

Izmir, all the Turks had sworn not to have their country trampled by the enemy and had begun arming themselves in order to drive out the Greeks. The enemy marched, burning the places through which he passed. While the Turkish heroes were struggling to crush the enemy's soldiers, they saw that the real great enemy, who bore the name of Padishah and Caliph, had cooperated with the Greeks. Yes, Vahideddin, who is the most treacherous king in the world, had gathered a band named "the Army of the Caliphate" in Istanbul and unleashed it upon the heroes who were trying to save the country. However, the brave Turk defeated both enemies, and the treacherous Vahideddin fled away on an enemy boat. The Turkish nation, which had groaned for hundreds of years under the tyranny of the Padishahs, would not, after seeing this, keep those men at its head. There remained no more place for the Padishahs and their families, who had drawn their weapons against the nation at its most sorrowful hour, and who had thought only of their own ease in the midst of the most horrible calamities. The Grand National Assembly, which realized this, abolished the reign of the Sultans, and proclaimed the Turkish Republic; it saved our nation from the tyranny of the treacherous Padishahs. Children, there is no doubt that we began to live from that day on, in an atmosphere of freedom and independence which hasn't been seen in Turkish history until now.²³²

On the other hand, the Kemalist orthodoxy has not been challenged for a long time. Some conservative authors emphasized the importance of Sultan Mehmed VI at the beginning of the Turkish War of Independence. They stressed that Sultan Mehmed VI laid the foundations of the War of Independence and used every means to realize a solution.²³³

After the victory in the Battle of Sakarya in August 1921, Mustafa Kemal's power within the Assembly increased. He was the President of the Assembly, the head of the council of ministers, and most importantly the Supreme Commander of the Army. Describing Sultan Mehmed VI as a "coward" was the first step to depreciate his status among the Ottoman people. In the second step, Kemalists started to blame him as a "traitor." Noel Barber points out that Mustafa Kemal wanted to dismiss the old Sultan from office, but, he realized that injuring the

²³² Mitat Sadullah Sander, *Yeni Yurt Bilgisi: Besinci Sinif [the New Knowledge of the Home: Fifth Grade]*, (Istanbul: Tefeyyuz Kutuphanesi, 1930), 40, referred by Allen, *The Turkish Transformation*, 42-43.

²³³ Kadir Misiroglu, *Sarikli Mucahitler [The Turbaned Mujahedeens]*, (Istanbul: Sebil Yayinevi, 1980), 40. Necip Fazil Kisakurek, *Vatan Haini Degil, Buyuk Vatan Dostu Sultan Vahdeddin [Not a Traitor but a Patriot of Fatherland: Sultan Vahdeddin]*, (Istanbul: Buyuk Dogu Yayinlari, 1976), 5-7.

religious feelings of the people who were still loyal to the Sultanate could be suicidal. For removing this obstacle, Mustafa Kemal “secretly engineered a campaign of vilification against the political actions of the Sultan, branding him and his cabinet as pliant tools of the foreigner and politically traitors to Turkey.”²³⁴ The Assembly debates prove that this campaign became very strong in the period of mid-1922.

In the discussions on the authority of the newly established Ankara Government, Mustafa Kemal accused Sultan Mehmed VI of collaborating with enemies to dissolve the Parliament in Istanbul. According to him, after this collaboration, people became regretful and they would not be deceived by the Sultan anymore.²³⁵ The collaboration of Sultan with the Allies, especially with Great Britain, was mentioned many times in the Assembly. Seref Bey, deputy of Edirne, raised this issue. While some of members of Turkish National Assembly in Ankara visited Sultan Mehmed VI to convince him to join as head of the National Struggle, he did not accept this proposal. When the Sultan sent the committee members away empty handed, he welcomed Robert Frew in order to collaborate with the British Government.²³⁶

Tahsin Bey, pro- Kemalist deputy of Aydin, exaggeratedly accused Sultan Mehmed VI of killing one and a half million Muslims because of his plots. He thought that Sultan Mehmed VI provoked some Ottoman citizens under the name of “The Caliphate Army”²³⁷ to fight the national army. Moreover, he collaborated with Greeks to wipe out the national resistance against the

²³⁴ Barber, *The Sultans*, 270.

²³⁵ *TBMM ZC*, 1 Dec. 1921, v.14, 435.

²³⁶ *TBMM ZC*, 6 Mar. 1922, v.18, 67.

²³⁷ The Caliphate Army was an army established on 18 April 1920 by the imperial government of the Ottoman Empire in order to fight against the Turkish National Movement in the aftermath of World War I. It was dissolved on June 25, 1920.

intruders.²³⁸ Yahya Galib Bey, another Kemalist deputy of Kirsehir, also criticized Sultan Mehmed VI as consulting with Greek generals. He compared the attitude of Sultan with the attitude of the King of England. While the King of England visited the graves of his soldiers and prayed for them, the Sultan of Ottomans was collaborating with enemies. Yahya Galib finished his words as “God damn you forever.”²³⁹

In the course of the discussions about the authority and duties of the Ankara Government, Huseyin Avni Bey, future leader of Second Group, criticized the Sultan and his court severely. According to Huseyin Avni Bey, there were two reasons for the humiliation of the Turkish people after World War I. The first reason was the occupation of the Ottoman Empire by Allies and the second was the Sultan’s court, which only aimed to steal all possessions of people and neglected them because of its selfish attitude. The court exploited people unmercifully.²⁴⁰ After explaining the poor conditions of Anatolian people, Huseyin Avni Bey summarized his point of view as: “We don’t see any Padishah, Sultan in here. Now, I am telling to you that a nation which goes with oxcarts does not want the Sultanate.”²⁴¹ During the same discussions, Yusuf Ziya Bey, deputy of Bitlis and another prominent figure of the Second Group, attacked the selfish attitude of Sultan Mehmed VI. Yusuf Ziya Bey accused the Sultan as a “covetous old man” who betrayed his people and his victorious forefathers to continue his Sultanate for a few days more. And from now on, Sultan Mehmed VI had no right to govern the nation.²⁴²

²³⁸ *TBMM ZC*, 6 Mar. 1922, v.18, 65-66.

²³⁹ *TBMM ZC*, 3 Jun. 1922, v.20, 138.

²⁴⁰ *TBMM ZC*, 28 Nov. 1921, v.14, 369-370.

²⁴¹ *TBMM ZC*, 28 Nov. 1921, v.14, 371.

²⁴² *TBMM ZC*, 29 Nov. 1921, v.14, 397.

The Kemalists' attacks on Sultan Mehmed VI started describing him a coward in mid-1921. Then they became harsher in late 1921, and the Sultan was described as a killer and traitor at that time. Not only Kemalists criticized Sultan Mehmed VI, but the democrat deputies in the opposition were also against him. These opponents, Huseyin Avni Bey and Yusuf Ziya Bey, mostly described the Sultan as a selfish man who wanted to continue his personal sovereignty without attention to the miserable conditions of his subjects. His selfish and apathetic character was the main target for these opponents.

2.2.4 End of the Sultanate

As an opportunist, Mustafa Kemal capitalized on further military successes. After the Turkish victory at Dumlupinar in August 1922, a Turkish reoccupation of Izmir and the evacuation of Anatolia by the Greeks in September 1922, Mustafa Kemal consolidated his power both at home and abroad.²⁴³ As a consequences of this victory, the Greek invasion in the West of Turkey terminated and the Ankara Government was invited to the peace conference in Lausanne, Switzerland. The British Government invited the Istanbul Government to the Peace Conference also. The Allied double invitation caused a great fury among the Kemalist deputies, who thought that only Ankara had paid the price to warrant attendance at Lausanne. The Ankara Government declared itself as the only representative of the Turkish nation. Mustafa Kemal did not waste this opportunity and decided to move against the Sultanate. For removing this duality in the Peace

²⁴³ William Miller, *The Ottoman Empire and Its Successors 1801-1927*, (London: Frank Cass& Co. Ltd., 1966), 555. Barlas, *Etatism and Diplomacy*, 121. Butler, *Shadow of the Sultan's Realm*, 227. Lewis, *The Emergence*, 248. Zurcher, *Turkey*, 155. William Miller, *The Ottoman Empire and Its Successors 1801-1927*, (London: Frank Cass& Co. Ltd., 1966), 555.

Treaty, Kemalists resolved to abolish the sultanate by separating it from the caliphate.²⁴⁴ According to Kinross, “it was hoped by this compromise to dispose of the Sultan while at the same time placating the religious elements in parliament.”²⁴⁵

On October 30, 1922, the demand of the Istanbul Government to join the Peace Conference in Lausanne was discussed in the Grand National Assembly in Ankara. In the discussions, Feyzi Bey, Minister of Public Works and a close ally of Mustafa Kemal, mentioned the Treaty of Sèvres, which was signed by the Istanbul Government. By signing this Treaty, the Istanbul Government accepted the annihilation of the Turkish people. Therefore, they had no rights to represent the nation in a new peace conference. Feyzi Bey expressed his feelings about the Ottoman Dynasty as: “today, the nation deems the Ottoman Sultanate ‘a thing of the past’.” The nation does not acknowledge the Ottoman Sultanate; they accept national sovereignty directly. After today, the nation will not follow the people who are in favor of Sultanate. Most of the people are not agreed with the Sultan and his Government. There is only a small group of people who want to continue Sultanate because of their personal interests in Istanbul.”²⁴⁶

Ilyas Sami Bey, pro-Kemalist deputy of Mus, criticized Sultan Mehmed VI harshly and warned the people who thought that Sultan was a captive in the hands of Allies. According to him, the Sultan was not captive; he did not take his negative actions against the national forces because of his hopeless situation in Istanbul. Sultan Mehmed VI took these negative actions against the national forces to continue his authority. While Muslims were killed by the invaders, he was

²⁴⁴ Sonyel, *Turkish Diplomacy*, 186. Cecen, *Kemalism*, 88. Davison, *The Modern Nations*, 125. Allen, *The Turkish Transformation*, 56. Orga, *Phoenix Ascendant*, 126.

²⁴⁵ Kinross, *Ataturk*, 395.

²⁴⁶ *TBMM ZC*, 30 Oct. 1922, v.24, 277.

apathetic to these tragedies and neglected his subjects.²⁴⁷ Ilyas Sami Bey's speech was an interesting one. The captivity of the Sultan was mostly expressed by the Kemalist deputies in the Assembly in a positive way at the early stage of the War.

At the same day Riza Nur, deputy of Sinop, and 78 of his friends introduced a motion, on the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, to the Grand National Assembly. Supported by a supplementary motion by Huseyin Avni Bey this motion resulted in the drafting of a bill, abolishing the Sultanate.²⁴⁸ In the motion, Riza Nur and his friends summarized their thoughts as: "because of the ignorance and lavishness of The Court and the Sublime Porte, the State and the nation were writhing in great catastrophes. When the collapse of the Ottoman Empire was destined, the nation, which was the real owner of the state, started to struggle against the invaders and Ottoman Court, which collaborated with enemies against the Turkish nation. When the nation saw the treason of the Court, popular sovereignty was accepted in the Law of Fundamental Organizations."²⁴⁹ After this introduction, Riza Nur and his friends introduced a proposal which included six articles to the Grand National Assembly. In these articles:

- 1- Ottoman Empire was abolished with its autocratic system.
- 2- A government of the Grand National Assembly, established on the basis of a national people's government, was established under the name of State of Turkey.
- 3- The new Turkish government is the only inheritor of the extinct Ottoman Empire in its national borders.
- 4- Because of resting national sovereignty in the Legislation, the Sultanate in Istanbul became a thing of past.
- 5- There is no legal government in Istanbul and its environs. Therefore, this area has to be governed by the government of the Grand National Assembly.
- 6- The Turkish government will rescue the Office of Caliphate from its captivity."²⁵⁰

²⁴⁷ *TBMM ZC*, 30 Oct. 1922, v.24, 281.

²⁴⁸ Sonyel, *Turkish Diplomacy*, 186.

²⁴⁹ *TBMM ZC*, 30 Oct. 1922, v.24, 292.

²⁵⁰ *TBMM ZC*, 30 Oct. 1922, v.24, 293.

During discussion of this proposal, Sultan Mehmed VI and his government were under attack by Kemalist parliamentarians. Riza Nur expressed his feelings joyfully as: “messieurs! The autocratic government was abolished. A person will no longer govern over this nation arbitrary. This nation does not tolerate this situation anymore. The nation cannot live in poverty and send money to Istanbul because of wastings of the Court.”²⁵¹ While Riza Nur was talking self-assuredly about the autocratic government, he became a target of another autocratic administration in 1926. He escaped to abroad from Kemalist wrath when he became an opponent of the regime at that time.

Nusret Effendi, deputy of Erzurum, heralded the members of the Assembly that the Sultanate had become a corpse and they would put it in a grave.²⁵² Ali Fuad Pasha, deputy of Ankara and later one of the founders of Progressive Republican Party in 1924, referred to hostility against the Sultan and his government while the national movement was struggling against its enemies. Ali Fuad Pasha considered the Sultan as an enemy like the Allies to the national movement.²⁵³ Tunali Hilmi Bey, deputy of Bolu, described Sultan Mehmed VI as a “coroneted traitor”, who had to be dismissed from the Sultanate and Caliphate.²⁵⁴ Mufid Effendi, deputy of Kirsehir, offered to judge Sultan Mehmed VI because of his high treason.²⁵⁵ Rasih Effendi, deputy of Antalya, specified his regret why they did not be aware of the real character of Sultan Mehmed VI, like a “killer”, a “traitor”, and an “ignorant” man.²⁵⁶ The worst defamation against Sultan

²⁵¹ *TBMM ZC*, 30 Oct. 1922, v.24, 295.

²⁵² *TBMM ZC*, 30 Oct. 1922, v.24, 288.

²⁵³ *TBMM ZC*, 30 Oct. 1922, v.24, 286.

²⁵⁴ *TBMM ZC*, 30 Oct. 1922, v.24, 294.

²⁵⁵ *TBMM ZC*, 30 Oct. 1922, v.24, 284.

²⁵⁶ *TBMM ZC*, 30 Oct. 1922, v.24, 272.

Mehmed VI came from Yahya Galib, deputy of Kirsehir. To enter World War I caused many troubles and catastrophes to the Turkish people. After summarizing the responsibilities of the Sultan and his government in this issue, Yahya Galib insulted the Sultan as a “bastard”, who took many negative actions against his people. According to him, the nation would not give its affairs to like this person anymore.²⁵⁷

After these discussions in the Assembly on October 30, 1922, Mustafa Kemal put his proposal to a meeting of the Association for the Defence of Rights the next day.²⁵⁸ Finally the proposal was discussed in the Assembly on November 1, 1922. First of all Mustafa Kemal talked about the future of the Caliphate and the Sultanate. In his speech, Mustafa Kemal started with the origin of the Turks and their contribution to Islamic Government. According to him, the origins of the Turkish nation went back to an individual named Turk who was the son of Japheth and the grandson of Noah.²⁵⁹ After stressing the importance of the Turks for their contribution to the Islamic state, Mustafa Kemal talked about God and Prophet Muhammad with proper deference. He showed his respect to the Prophet as the last of the prophets and to the Book (Quran) as perfect.²⁶⁰ Mustafa Kemal used Islamic history to argue for popular sovereignty in his speech also. He remarked that after the death of the Prophet Muhammad, the first four caliphs were elected and that they relied on consultation for matters dealing with leadership, the state, and the society.²⁶¹

After pointing out the Ottoman Dynasty and its importance to the Caliphate subject, Mustafa Kemal placed personal blame on Mehmed VI for nearly bringing the Turkish nation into

²⁵⁷ *TBMM ZC*, 30 Oct. 1922, v.24, 278.

²⁵⁸ Lewis, *The Emergence*, 252.

²⁵⁹ *TBMM ZC*, 1 Nov. 1922, v. 24, 305-306.

²⁶⁰ *TBMM ZC*, 1 Nov. 1922, v. 24, 306.

²⁶¹ *TBMM ZC*, 1 Nov. 1922, v. 24, 306-310.

enslavement.²⁶² In his speech, Mustafa Kemal repeated the treason of Sultan Mehmed VI and described him as a “foolish man” who became a tool of foreigners to destroy the existence of Turkish nation. Because of his treason, Sultan Mehmed VI deserved his fate. According to him, after today there would be no other government except the Ankara Government and no other sovereignty except the Grand National Assembly.²⁶³ At the end of his speech, Mustafa Kemal showed his satisfaction that the deputies were united and had a unanimous decision in this subject.²⁶⁴ After Mustafa Kemal’s speech, the motion of Riza Nur Bey was sent to a Special Commission, which included the Sharia, Constitution, and Justice commissions, for an investigation.

There was a strong opposition to the motion of Riza Nur Bey in the Special Commission. In particular the members of the Sharia Commission, who were mostly men of religion, raised all kinds of legal and theological objections to the motion. Mustafa Kemal was very unsatisfied because of these strong objections to the abolition of the Sultanate. He sent them a message threatening them with arrest if they delayed.²⁶⁵ The Office of Sultanate was an obstacle to his personal autocracy and he wanted to destroy it forever. From his sayings it can be understood that he would destroy the Office of the Sultanate regardless:

Finally, I asked the Chairman of the joint committee for permission to speak, and, jumping on the bench in front of me, I made this statement, in a loud voice: “Gentlemen, I said, Sovereignty and Sultanate are not given to anyone by anyone because scholarship proves that they should be; or through discussion or debate. Sovereignty and Sultanate are taken by strength, by power and by force. It was by force that the sons of Osman seized the sovereignty and Sultanate of the Turkish nation; they have maintained this usurpation for six centuries. Now the Turkish nation has rebelled, has put a stop to these usurpers, and has effectively taken

²⁶² Howard, *History of Turkey*, 92. Gawrych, *Young Ataturk*, 252.

²⁶³ *TBMM ZC*, 1 Nov. 1922, v. 24, 310.

²⁶⁴ *TBMM ZC*, 1 Nov. 1922, v. 24, 311.

²⁶⁵ Lewis, *The Emergence*, 252. Price, *A History of Turkey*, 126.

sovereignty and sultanate into its own hands. This is an accomplished fact. The question under discussion is not whether or not we should leave Sultanate and sovereignty to the nation. That is already an accomplished fact – the question is merely how to give expression to it. This will happen in any case. If those gathered here, the Assembly, and everyone else could look at this question in a natural way, I think they would agree. Even if they do not, ‘the truth will still find expression, but some heads may roll in the process.’ As regards the theological aspect of the matter, there is no need for alarm or anxiety on the part of the reverend gentlemen. Let me give you scholarly explanations. Having said this, I went on to give a lengthy explanation. Thereupon one of the deputies for Ankara, Hodja Mustafa Efendi said: “I beg your pardon, sir, we were looking at the matter from another point of view. We have been enlightened by your explanations.”²⁶⁶

Irfan Orga emphasizes the psychological attitude of Mustafa Kemal as: “Cool and steady he faced them, his own personal bodyguard beside him. The deputies growled uneasily and the bodyguard made a great show of examining their guns. Mustafa Kemal, it was obvious, would stop at nothing to gain his point; murder might be committed in the Assembly that would seem like accident. It was in moments like this that he was the Supreme Dictator, insisting – by force if necessary- on imposing his will. He believed passionately that he was right and that the nation could grow strong only without a Sultan.”²⁶⁷

After convincing the members of the Sharia Commission in the Special Commission, a draft law was quickly drawn up, and read at the second sitting of the Assembly on November 1, 1922. The draft, which had two articles, was passed by the Assembly the same day. In the first article, the draft indicated that people of Turkey considered that the form of government in Istanbul resting on the sovereignty of an individual had ceased to exist on March 16, 1920, and passed forever into history. In the second article, the draft recognized that the Caliphate belonged to the Ottoman house and the candidate to that office would be elected by the Grand National Assembly

²⁶⁶ Stephen Kinzer, *Crescent and Star: Turkey Between Two Worlds*, (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001), 42. Lewis, *The Emergence*, 253. Kinross, *Ataturk*, 396., *Phoenix Ascendant*, 126-127.

²⁶⁷ Orga, *Phoenix Ascendant*, 127.

itself.²⁶⁸ While some of the deputies wanted a roll-call vote for the draft, Mustafa Kemal rejected this suggestion. He stated that there was no need for this suggestion and he was sure that the Assembly would unanimously adopt the principles which would forever preserve the independence of the country and nation.²⁶⁹

After Mustafa Kemal's suggestion for the voting method, Huseyin Avni Bey gave his reaction to the draft law. According to him the nation decided to take the full authority to its hands nearly three years ago from the first session of the Grand National Assembly. The nation sacrificed uncountable victims to realize national sovereignty. There were some two or three hundred people, benefitting from the luxury of the Court, who did not want to leave their offices. The Grand National Assembly would not make the nation a servant to anyone for the sake of a few hundred wretched people.²⁷⁰

After Huseyin Avni Bey's speech, the draft bill was put to the vote by the chairman. While the chairman announced that the bill had been unanimously accepted, Ziya Hursid Bey, deputy of Trabzon, rose and said that he was opposing the law. Thus, the draft was accepted by the majority of votes, not unanimously. However, his opposition was drowned by the other deputies crying "silence."²⁷¹ Finally the Sultanate was abolished by the Grand National Assembly on November 1, 1922.

Turkish newspapers described this situation as a great event. *Aksam (Evening)*, a Kemalist newspaper published in Istanbul, announced the abolishment of Sultanate as "our state is the new

²⁶⁸ TBMM ZC, 1 Nov. 1922, v. 24, 314. Seref Gozubuyuk and Suna Kili, *Türk Anayasa Metinleri [Turkish Constitutional Texts]*, (Ankara: AUSBF Yayinlari, 1957), 90-91.

²⁶⁹ TBMM ZC, 1 Nov. 1922, v. 24, 314.

²⁷⁰ TBMM ZC, 1 Nov. 1922, v. 24, 314-315.

²⁷¹ TBMM ZC, 1 Nov. 1922, v. 24, 315.

Turkish state in Ankara, after today there is no Sultan for the Turkish people.” In the article on the first page, *Aksam* blamed the Sultan and his government because of their action against Turkish nation while the entire World was the enemies of Turks.²⁷² In *Renin (Scream)*, a Turkish newspaper published in Istanbul, Huseyin Cahid Bey, one of the most prominent figures of the Turkish press, called this event as a “revolution”, which completed the revolution of 1908.²⁷³

The abolition of the Ottoman Sultanate was observed carefully by the foreign press also. *The New York Times* announced this event as: “Angora Hostile toward Sultan” on November 3, 1922. The resolution of Riza Nur, which accused the Istanbul Government of treason, was mentioned in this copy.²⁷⁴ The next day, the article “Sultanate ended by Angora Decree; Assembly Supreme” was published in *the New York Times*. In this article, Edwin L. James pointed out that the Sultan was dethroned and the end of Ottoman Empire was declared by the National Assembly. Moreover, the Assembly reserved the right to elect the new Caliph. James underlined the French point of view that this action was equivalent to the establishment of a republic in Turkey.²⁷⁵ Speculation about establishing a republic appeared in the Swiss press, too. In an article in the *Journal de Genève*, the deposition of Sultan was seen as establishing a republic.²⁷⁶ *Le Temps* announced the Ankara Government’s decision about the abolishment of Sultanate to its readers on November 3, 1922.²⁷⁷ On November 5, 1922, *Le Temps* emphasized five important decisions of the new national Turkish Government, which were mentioned in the resolution of Riza Nur.²⁷⁸

²⁷² *Aksam*, 3 Nov. 1922, 1.

²⁷³ Huseyin Cahid; “Inkilab” [Revolution], *Renin*, 4 Nov. 1922, 1.

²⁷⁴ *The New York Times*, 3 Nov. 1922, 4.

²⁷⁵ *The New York Times*, 4 Nov. 1922, 1.

²⁷⁶ *Journal de Genève*, 3 Nov. 1922, 3.

²⁷⁷ *Le Temps*, 3 Nov. 1922, 1.

²⁷⁸ *Le Temps*, 5 Nov. 1922, 1.

Corriere della Sera, the Italian newspaper, announced the news as, “historic days in Turkey.” Arnaldo Fraccaroli, the special correspondent of the *Corriere della Sera*, underlined that the National Assembly would be the only sovereign and the representative of people in Turkey after the abolishment of the Sultanate.²⁷⁹

According to the foreign press there was a risk of Bolshevism in Turkey. The decision of Ankara Government raised some concerns among Monarchists and Turkish moderate circles. According to Edwin L. James, these circles expected internal dissension as a consequence of the action of the Grand National Assembly. These circles expressed that “the step of the Ankara Government was a triumph for the Bolshevik policy in the Near East and a prelude to the sovietization of Turkey.”²⁸⁰ However, the Turkish press denied the sovietization of the country. In an article in the newspaper *Aksam*, Necmeddin Sadik Bey discussed the relationship between Turkey and the Soviet Union. In the article, “The administration of Turkey and Bolshevism”, Necmeddin Sadik suggested that the friendship of these two states was very close, but the social and economic structures of these countries were totally different than each other. Therefore, the new Turkish administration would never imitate Bolshevik policies.²⁸¹

The end of the Sultanate became a fact after the consolidation of Kemalist power. Victories against the Greek Army in August 1922 enabled the Kemalist movement to make peace negotiations with the Allies. The duality of the Turkish representation would be a problem for the Turkish side in the Peace Conference. Mustafa Kemal used this possibility in favor of improving

²⁷⁹ *Corriere della Sera*, 5 Nov. 1922, 3.

²⁸⁰ *The New York Times*, 4 Nov. 1922, 4.

²⁸¹ Necmeddin Sadik; “Türkiye’nin İdaresi ve Bolşevizm” [The administration of Turkey and Bolshevism], *Aksam*, 6 Nov. 1922, 1.

his leadership to abolish the Sultanate and to make the Istanbul Government void. After eliminating the rival, Mustafa Kemal and his government became the sole power in the country.

2.2.5 After the Abolition of the Sultanate

The Ankara Government became the only legitimate political power in Turkey after the abolition of the Sultanate on November 1, 1922. Tewfik Pasha, head of the Istanbul Government, tried to obtain advice and assistance from the Allied commanders in these days. However, after losing the hope of getting any assistance, he resigned his office on November 4, 1922. Ironically there was no authority, because of the abolition of the Sultanate, competent to accept the resignation of Tewfik Pasha Cabinet in Istanbul. Therefore, he gave his seal of office to Refet Pasha, the Grand National Assembly's representative who had arrived in Istanbul on October 19, 1922.²⁸² The Ankara Government accepted a new resolution on the election of the new Caliph on November 5, 1922. The new caliph would be chosen by the Grand National Assembly.²⁸³

Sultan Mehmed VI attended the last "Cuma Selamligi"²⁸⁴ as the Caliph of all Muslims on November 10, 1922. He encountered an immediate protest, the troops presented arms without cheering for the Padishah, and only the Caliph – not the Sultan- was mentioned in the Khutba, the Friday sermon. On November 16, 1922, the Grand National Assembly accused Sultan Mehmed VI of high treason and ordered him and his cabinet ministers to be placed on trial.²⁸⁵ Beyond that Sultan Mehmed VI thought that his life was under threat and he was afraid of being killed in the Friday prayers. Because of his concern about his life, on November 17, 1922, Sultan Mehmed VI

²⁸² Kinross, *Ataturk*, 397. Allen, *The Turkish Transformation*, 56. Sonyel, *Turkish Diplomacy*, 186.

²⁸³ *Basbakanlik Cumhuriyet Arsivleri (Office of the Prime Minister Republic Archives)*, 5 Nov. 1922, Folder: 2446 Document No: 202.379.3. After this note, it will show as BCA.

²⁸⁴ The public procession of the Turkish Sultan to a mosque on Friday at noon.

²⁸⁵ Chirol, *The Turkish Empire*, 446. Tamkoc, *The Warrior Diplomats*, 90. Barber, *The Sultans*, 271.

requested British protection from General Charles Harrington, the Commander of the British occupation forces in Istanbul and he was conveyed to Malta on board HMS Malaya.²⁸⁶ The British authorities declared a memorandum about the situation of the Sultan and his letter for the British protection.²⁸⁷ When this letter was read in the Grand National Assembly, the members of Assembly shouted as “go to hell” after the flight of the last Sultan of the Ottoman Empire.²⁸⁸

The Turkish press badmouthed the flight of the last Sultan. In *Aksam*, Falih Rifki Bey, one of the staunch Kemalists, blamed Sultan Mehmed VI as a coward who left the country under the protection of enemies. In his article, “Korkarak kaciyor”, Falih Rifki warned the ex-Sultan as: “The curses of God, the Prophet, and the nation follow you. O coward fugitive, where will you escape?”²⁸⁹ According to the Kemalist press the flight of the Sultan increased the hatred of Turkish people towards him.²⁹⁰

The getaway of the Sultan under the British protection was mentioned by the foreign newspapers also. On November 18, 1922, *the New York Times* mentioned this news as “Sultan in flight on British Warship.” Mehmed VI requested asylum because of the Kemalist threat on his life. In the article, Sultan Mehmed VI told to the British authorities that he would not abdicate from his Crown. The British Government was so anxious about this event because of the possible

²⁸⁶ Nasit Hakki Ulug, *Halifeligin Sonu [The End of Caliphate]*, (Istanbul: Turkiye Is Bankasi Kultur Yayinlari, 1975), 76. Yilmaz Cetiner, *Son Padiisah Vahdettin [Vahdeddin, the Last Padishah]*, 14th ed., (Istanbul: Epsilon Yayinlari, 2005), 258. Firouz Bahrapour, *Turkey: Political and Social Transformation*, (New York, NY: Theo. Gaus’ Sons, Inc., 1967), 8. Lewis, *The Emergence*, 254. Sonyel, *Turkish Diplomacy*, 186. Allen, *The Turkish Transformation*, 56.

²⁸⁷ *BCA*, 17 Nov. 1922, Folder: 24412 Document No; 202.379.10.

²⁸⁸ *TBMM ZC*, 18 Nov. 1922, v.24, 562.

²⁸⁹ Falih Rifki, “Korkarak Kaciyor” [Fleeing Gutlessly], *Aksam*, 19 Nov. 1922, 1.

²⁹⁰ *Vakit*, 19 Nov. 1922, 1.

stirring among its Muslim subjects in India.²⁹¹ *Le Temps* mentioned about this event on November 19, 1922. In the news, the French newspaper referred El Mukaddem, the Egyptian newspaper, the departure of Sultan agitated Muslims in Egypt and Sharif Hussein, the emir of Mecca, invited him to Mecca.²⁹² This possibility disturbed the Ankara Government. In the National Archives, there is a document which warns the government about the future plan of the ex-Sultan. In this document, it was reported that Sultan Mehmed VI would go to Egypt from Malta and he would make propagandas in the Islamic World.²⁹³ However, this possibility had never become a reality.

After the flight of the last Sultan, Mehmed VI, on November 17, 1922, the Office of the Caliphate became vacant. On November 18, 1922, the Grand National Assembly in Ankara gathered to appoint a new Caliph.²⁹⁴ During the discussions the last Sultan was criticized harshly. Rauf Bey, the head of Ankara Government, blamed Sultan Mehmed VI as a traitor who left the Caliphate for British protection. According to him, this kind of treason was not seen before in the Turkish history.²⁹⁵ The vacancy of Caliphate would not be good for the nation; therefore, a new Caliph had to be appointed. Vehbi Effendi, the Minister of Sharia, wrote a fatwa which described the dethronement of Sultan Mehmed VI as the Caliph of Muslims.²⁹⁶ In the elections, Abdulmecid Effendi got 148 votes out of 162 from the members of the Assembly and was appointed as the new Caliph by the Ankara Government.²⁹⁷

²⁹¹ *The New York Times*, 18 Nov. 1922, 2.

²⁹² *Le Temps*, 19 Nov. 1922, 1.

²⁹³ *BCA*, 24 Nov. 1922, Folder: 24423, Document No: 202.379.21.

²⁹⁴ Kalaycioglu, *Turkish Dynamics*, 40. Lewis, *The Emergence*, 254. Orga, *Phoenix Ascendant*, 128. Davison, *The Modern Nations*, 125. Chirol, *The Turkish Empire*, 447.

²⁹⁵ *TBMM ZC*, 18 Nov. 1922, v.24, 563.

²⁹⁶ *TBMM ZC*, 18 Nov. 1922, v.24, 564.

²⁹⁷ *TBMM ZC*, 18 Nov. 1922, v.24, 565. *BCA*, 19 Nov. 1922, Document No: 13.113.62. *Vakit*, 20 Nov. 1922, 1.

After the decision was taken by the Assembly, Mustafa Kemal sent a telegram and congratulated the new Caliph. He also wished that the Caliphate would be auspicious for the Muslim World.²⁹⁸ On the other hand, this event was seen as “the downfall of the bulwark of theocracy” in the Ottoman Empire by foreign observers. William H. Crawford summarized the separation of Church and State in his article in *the New York Times* on November 19, 1922. In the article, Crawford thought that the separation of the Caliphate from all material power would be the end of theocracy in Turkey.²⁹⁹

The abolition of Sultanate and the flight of the last Sultan meant the Ankara Government would be the only representative of Turkey in the Peace conference in Lausanne, Switzerland. The Conference began on November 20, 1922, and the Turkish delegation was represented under the leadership of Ismet Inonu, the Minister of Foreign Affairs.³⁰⁰

In conclusion, the attitude of Kemalists towards to the last Sultan of the Ottoman Dynasty changed during the stages of the Turkish War of Independence 1919-1922. At the first stage, Mustafa Kemal and his followers made good relations with the Sultan and the Court. When the National Assembly was opened in April, 1920, Kemalists declared their aim as rescuing the Sultan and Caliph who was under the captivity of the foreign yoke. After the Kemalist victories against the Greeks in the West part of Turkey, Mustafa Kemal gained a great reputation and this reputation enabled him to consolidate his power against the Istanbul Government. As an opportunist, Mustafa Kemal eliminated one of his rivals by abolishing the Office of Sultanate. After the end of the Ottoman Sultanate, Mustafa Kemal separated the Caliphate from the Sultanate. The main goal for

²⁹⁸ Tanin, 20 Nov. 1922, 1.

²⁹⁹ *The New York Times*, 19 Nov. 1922, 1.

³⁰⁰ Tanin, 22 Nov. 1922, 1.

him was to divide the religious authority from the state affairs. Controlling Caliphate under the protection of National Assembly would increase the power of Mustafa Kemal. His next steps would be the establishment of Turkish Republic in October 1923, and the abolishment of the Ottoman Caliphate in March 1924. After these attempts, Mustafa Kemal would manage to dismiss the religious authority from the political structure of Turkey and establish his personal autocracy in a secular way.

2.3 The Establishment of the Turkish Republic

After the abolition of the Sultanate on November 1, 1922, the Kemalist movement took another step by establishing the Republic on October 29, 1923, on the course of changing the political system in Turkey. According to Dietrich Jung, “the proclamation of the Turkish republic was the final step towards abandoning the patrimonial identity of the Empire, and was the key event in a series of political and cultural reforms implemented during the fifteen years of Mustafa Kemal’s presidency.”³⁰¹ On the other hand, this change was an important step towards the Kemalist autocracy. When the Ottoman Sultanate was abolished in November 1922, the political structure of the new emerging Turkish state was still somewhat indeterminate. Turkey was ruled by the National Assembly, which elected not only the president but also every minister directly.³⁰² This system was a barrier to Mustafa Kemal’s controlling the entire system. However, after Mustafa Kemal was elected as the President of Turkish Republic, he became the most powerful man in Turkey.

Mustafa Kemal is seen by the Kemalist orthodoxy as a foresighted man who decided and created the establishment of the republic before this date. The core of this orthodoxy is based on

³⁰¹ Jung and Piccoli, *Turkey at the Crossroads*, 60.

³⁰² Zurcher, *Turkey*, 166.

Mustafa Kemal's myth of the "national secret" (milli sir). In his Speech in 1927, Mustafa Kemal stressed the evolution of the idea of republic and his future plans about the modernization:

The practical and secure path for success was to implement each phase at the most opportune moment. This was the sound way for the development and advancement of the nation. However, this practical and secure method of success has sometimes been the reason for and explanation of certain essential and secondary conflicts, indignations [vexations], and even separations between some of the gentlemen who were known to be my close associates with regard to convictions. Some of the fellow travelers who started the national struggle have come to the point of resisting and opposing me as they have reached the limits of their own ideas and psychologies in the course of the progress of the national life leading up to the present Republic and its Republican laws. I will indicate these points one by one in due course in order for you to become enlightened and also to facilitate enlightenment of the public opinion. If it is possible to summarize these last words of mine, I can say that I was bound to put into force step by step this great capacity for progress that I sensed in the nation's conscience and future, all the while carrying it in my conscience like a national secret.³⁰³

This national secret myth was emphasized in the memoirs of Mazhar Mufit Bey also. When Mustafa Kemal started to organize the national movement in eastern Turkey in May 1919, Mazhar Mufit Bey asked "what would be the form of the government if the national movement won victory?" Mustafa Kemal responded "let me say frankly: the form of government will be a republic when the time is ripe."³⁰⁴ According to Mazhar Mufit Bey, the establishment of the republic was one of the future projects of Mustafa Kemal. However, Andrew Mango is skeptical that these long term objectives were clear in Mustafa Kemal's mind at that time. He stresses that "there is little doubt that Mustafa Kemal did indeed harbor these designs, although he was probably not as explicit as Mazhar Mufit claims."³⁰⁵ This section covers discussions about the establishment of the Turkish Republic in the Grand National Assembly and in the Turkish press.

³⁰³ Nurullah Ardic, *Islam and the Politics of Secularism: The Caliphate and Middle Eastern Modernization in the Early 20th Century*, (London: Routledge, 2012), 304-305. Atatürk, *Nutuk*, 15-16.

³⁰⁴ Kansu, *Erzurum'dan Olumune Kadar*, 74.

³⁰⁵ Mango, *Ataturk*, xliii.

2.3.1 Towards to the Republic

Mustafa Kemal announced his intention to dissolve the Assembly and to hold new elections on April 1, 1923. In this session Mustafa Kemal gave a key speech. He emphasized that the core of the Turkish state was national sovereignty. Moreover, he had confidence in the maturity of the Turkish people to continue its sovereignty. Therefore, there would not be a sovereign or a dictator who would rule the state in the future.³⁰⁶ A week later, he presented a nine-point manifesto for his People's Party. After the amendment to the High Treason Law, which declared that to campaign for a return to the sultanate was illegal, was passed in the Assembly on April 15, 1923, the Grand National Assembly was dissolved the next day.³⁰⁷

The two-stage elections for a new assembly were held in June and July 1923. Mustafa Kemal was actively involved in the process through the speeches he made and the alliances he formed. There was no question that Mustafa Kemal tried to control the election process and to influence the outcome. Beyond that Mustafa Kemal's strict policy for choosing candidates enabled a great victory for his People's Party. Not only Mustafa Kemal's involvement in the elections causes the defeat for the former Second Group. The former opposition group was defeated because of lack of a nationally organized party and no charismatic leader like Mustafa Kemal.³⁰⁸ The Second group was a vibrant group in the Assembly, but, it was impossible for them to cope with Mustafa Kemal's prestige after the Turkish War of Independence was won.

³⁰⁶ *TBMM ZC*, 1 Apr. 1923, v.28, 293.

³⁰⁷ Zurcher, *Turkey*, 159.

³⁰⁸ Hakan Ozoglu, *From Caliphate to Secular State: Power Struggle in the Early Turkish Republic*, (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2011), 83. Ada Holly Shissler, *Between Two Empires: Ahmet Agaoglu and the New Turkey*, (London: I.B.Tauris, 2003), 186. Zurcher, *Turkey*, 160. In this election only Zeki Bey, deputy of Gumushane, was elected from the former Second Group.

Despite the consolidation of Mustafa Kemal's hold on power that the elections of June-July 1923 represented, another opposition emerged after the second period of the Assembly convened on August 11, 1923. Some individuals like Rauf Bey and Kazim Karabekir Pasha, who had won fame during the national struggle, had the political stature to compete with Mustafa Kemal for leadership roles within the Mustafa Kemal's People's Party. These individuals were relatively more gradualist in their approach to questions of modernization and political change.³⁰⁹

While foreign observers interpreted the abolition of the Ottoman Sultanate as declaring a republic in Turkey,³¹⁰ Turkish public opinion was not as bold. Mustafa Kemal had used the word 'republic' for the very first time in an interview with the *Neue Freie Presse* in Vienna on September 22, 1923.³¹¹ In the interview, Mustafa Kemal talked about the first articles of the Turkish Constitution which specified the sovereignty of the people unconditionally. Beyond this, Mustafa Kemal added "executive power and the authorization of legislation was vested and congregated in the National Assembly which was the sole representative of the people. It is possible to summarize these two words in a word: republic."³¹²

This interview electrified Turkish public opinion. Lord Kinross describes the situation in Turkey as: "The concept of a republic was one wholly at odds with that of the traditional Moslem state, and this was the first time the ugly word had been uttered in a Turkish context. The threat of the change caused commotion, both in the press of Istanbul and in the lobbies of Parliament, where

³⁰⁹ Tamkoc, *The Warrior Diplomats*, 91. Shissler, *Between Two Empires*, 187.

³¹⁰ *The New York Times*, 4 Nov. 1922, 1. *Journal de Genève*, 3 Nov. 1922, 1.

³¹¹ Jung and Piccoli, *Turkey at the Crossroads*, 59. Kinross, *Ataturk*, 431. Zurcher, *Turkey*, 167. Kansu, *Erzurum'dan Olumune Kadar*, 595.

³¹² Sadi Borak and Utkan Kocaturk, *Ataturk'un Soylev ve Demecleri III [Speeches and Declarations of Ataturk III]*, (Ankara: Ankara Universitesi Basimevi, 1972), 63-66.

no serious republican movement had yet existed.”³¹³ It is a fact that after this interview of Mustafa Kemal with a foreign correspondent, the Turkish press started to discuss this subject intensively.

The pro-Kemalist newspaper *Aksam* pointed out the importance of Mustafa Kemal’s declaration. The newspaper underlined that the advancement of Turkey had not ceased and the democratic republic would be the ultimate goal for Turkey.³¹⁴ Another pro-Kemalist newspaper *Vakit* mentioned the interview also. *Vakit* interpreted Mustafa Kemal’s words as: “the future evolution of Turkey will be a republic.”³¹⁵ The conservative newspaper *Tevhid-i Efkar* asked “will our form of government be a republic?”³¹⁶ *Vatan* described the future republic as a “people’s republic” in its columns.³¹⁷ *Tanin* also declared the new state as “a People’s republic of Turkey” on September 24, 1923.³¹⁸ In his article in *Tanin*, Huseyin Cahid exhibited his sympathy to the notion of a republic. He believed that the state would be better under the presidency of Mustafa Kemal. He advised Mustafa Kemal to separate himself from the struggles of partisanship which would be disaster of the country.³¹⁹

On September 25, 1923, *Vakit* announced that a group of People’s Party had gathered to discuss the alteration of the Constitution. The correspondent of *Vakit* was sure about the acceptance of a republic as the form of government and Ankara as the new capital of this republic.³²⁰ Huseyin

³¹³ Kinross, *Ataturk*, 431.

³¹⁴ *Aksam*, 24 Sep. 1923, 1.

³¹⁵ *Vakit*, 24 Sep. 1923, 1.

³¹⁶ *Tevhid-i Efkar*, 24 Sep. 1923, 1.

³¹⁷ *Vatan*, 25 Sep. 1923, 1.

³¹⁸ *Tanin*, 24 Sep. 1923, 1.

³¹⁹ Huseyin Cahid, “Turkiye Cumhuriyeti” (Republic of Turkey), *Tanin*, 25 Sep. 1923, 1.

³²⁰ *Vakit*, 25 Sep. 1923, 1.

Cahid warned the deputies to think over this subject carefully. According to him, an alteration which was examined carefully would stop all future debates on this subject.³²¹

Conservative criticism of the republic came from *Tevhid-i Efkar* mostly. The editor of *Tevhid-i Efkar* was surprised at these discussions about a change of regime. In his article, “Where did the subject of republic emanate from?” Velid Ebuzziya showed his reluctance. According to him, the form of the Turkish state had been changed just ten months ago after the abolition of the Sultanate in November 1922, therefore another change would be unnecessary. Velid Bey complained that when they - the editors of the Istanbul press- alleged the lack of perfection of the last change which actualized ten months ago- the Ankara press and Government attacked them as traitors. They were accused by Ankara government of “high treason” because of their reluctance. Velid Bey expressed his astonishment about the new attitude of Ankara Government in ten months. Therefore, this future change could cause new problems. Because of these concerns Velid Bey showed dissatisfaction.³²² Beyond these concerns, he believed that the notion of republic would not be reconcilable with national sovereignty. Velid Ebuzziya described different types of republics in the world. According to him, the French style and the American style of republics were the best but neither of them were compatible with the decision of the abolition of the Sultanate.³²³

On September 26, 1923, *Aksam* raised the possible change in the structure of the government. The author believed that the prospective form of the republic would be different than

³²¹ Huseyin Cahid, “Etrafli Dusunelim” [Let’s Think Comprehensively], *Tanin*, 27 Sep. 1923, 1.

³²² Velid Ebuzziya, “Cumhuriyet Bahsi de Nereden Cikti?” [Where did the Republic Issue Emanate From?], *Tevhid-i Efkar*, 25 Sep. 1923, 1.

³²³ Velid Ebuzziya, “Cumhuriyet Hakimiyeti Milliye Esasi ile Kabil-i Telif Degildir” [Republic is not compatible with the Basis of National Sovereignty], *Tevhid-i Efkar*, 26 Sep. 1923, 1.

the forms of other republics.³²⁴ Even though the correspondent of *Aksam* designated the possible regime as a republic, the differences between Turkish style republic and the others was not clear. The next day, the attitude of the newspaper changed. On September 27, 1923, the correspondent of *Aksam* suggested debates about the form of the government were ongoing and the acceptance of a republic was not decided definitely at that time.³²⁵

On September 28, 1923, discussions about the form of government in the Istanbul press were seen as hurried and unnecessary by the newspaper *Aksam*. According to the newspaper, the People's Party was not interested in this subject. The only thing known by public opinion, was the interview of Mustafa Kemal with a foreign correspondent.³²⁶ At the same day, Rasih Effendi, deputy of Antalya, stated that the subject was not mentioned in the party group.³²⁷ However, the party group was split into two factions. One supported the republic and wanted to see Mustafa Kemal as the president of the Republic. The other faction, which was supporting a gradual change in the political structure, wanted to keep the status quo and the position of Mustafa Kemal.³²⁸ Because of this struggle, the People's Party was bifurcated.³²⁹ This is an important detail which suggests there was an opposition to the autocratic tendency of Mustafa Kemal within his own party.

Discussions of a republic became a source of humor. In the magazine *Akbaba*, one of the famous humor magazines at that time, joked that:

³²⁴ *Aksam*, 26 Sep. 1923, 1.

³²⁵ "Devletin Sekli Idaresi Henuz Kati Surette Tespit edilmemistir, Tasavvur Halindedir" [The Form of Government was not fixed yet definitely], *Aksam*, 27 Sep. 1923, 1.

³²⁶ "Kelime Uzerinde Oynamayalim" [Do not falsify upon the Word], *Aksam*, 28 Sep. 1923, 1.

³²⁷ *Vatan*, 28 Nov. 1923, 1.

³²⁸ *Vatan*, 30 Nov. 1923, 1.

³²⁹ *Tevhid-i Efkar*, 16 Oct. 1923, 1.

I am being astonished as read the newspapers. It seems that everybody is follower of republic in our society. Every author is writing in favor of the republic, everybody is praising the republic. They all say it is impossible to live without republic. All of these men are intelligent, experienced, and erudite men. I do not see any reason to disbelieve their words. I do not know, how it was happen that to want a republic came to nobody's mind. When the People's Party wanted to change the Turkish Constitution of 1921 and became pro-republican, everybody reminded it. The newspapers opened up their columns to the republic and the authors started to serenade to it. Almost in unison they said that 'o sweet republic, nice republic! Our lives sacrifice for the sake of you.' Everybody seems as a follower of the republic. The famous opponent journalist of *Tanin* is proud of being a republican for a long time; even, the conservative journalist Ebuzziya Hoca says 'republic is a right.' I wonder if everybody is sincere in this subject. Unfortunately the people's inner feelings are not as seen as their faces.³³⁰

The foreign press observed the discussions and developments. As mentioned above, after the abolition of the Sultanate, the new regime of Turkey was entitled as a republic by some foreign newspapers. In September 1923, the news about the possible change in the Turkish regime was discussed intensely. *The New York Times* announced rumors about the establishment of a republic in Turkey on September 29, 1923. In the news, the newspaper underlined that the rumor was not confirmed yet by any direct Turkish sources.³³¹ The *Journal de Genève* reported the same news which it referred from the Reuter Agency. The newspaper announced that the proclamation of the Turkish Republic was declared.³³² *Corriere della Sera* asked the question as "Is Republic in Turkey?" in its copy on September 30, 1923. In the news, *Corriere della Sera* referred the dispatch of the Havas Agency and announced that there was no clear decision for the change of the constitution until that time.³³³ Discussions about the future change in the Turkish Constitution appeared in the foreign press also. According to *the New York Times*, the new Turkish Constitution would provide that "Turkey be proclaimed a republic, with a President elected for a period of four

³³⁰ "Cumhuriyet" [Republic], *Akbaba*, 27 Sep. 1923, 1.

³³¹ *The New York Times*, 29 Sep. 1923, 1.

³³² *Journal de Genève*, 29 Sep. 1923, 8.

³³³ *Corriere della Sera*, 30 Sep. 1923, 2.

or five years.”³³⁴ In *Journal de Genève*, the term of presidency was reported as four or six years.³³⁵ *Corriere della Sera* reported that after the change in the Constitution, the term of Presidency would be three or four years.³³⁶ *Los Angeles Times* expressed that American ideas would be copied by the Ankara Government for possible changes to the Constitution. The newspaper also mentioned about the growing opposition in Istanbul against the change of regime in Turkey. Despite these opponents, the Ankara Government “determined to call a spade a spade and formally proclaim Turkey as republic.”³³⁷ This prediction of the *Los Angeles Times* would be a reality within two weeks.

2.3.2 Kemalist “Fait Accompli”: The Cabinet Crisis

The President of the Assembly was the head of the state and the prime minister and ministers were appointed individually by the votes of the members of the Assembly. It was still responsible for the election of ministers, a privilege which impaired its cohesion by encouraging factional and personal maneuvers for power.³³⁸ Because it stopped his personal maneuvers for getting full power, Mustafa Kemal considered this method of election harmful to a strong government.³³⁹

The faction within the party labeled as a “Secret Opposition” by Mustafa Kemal put forward two candidates for vacant posts in the government on October 25, 1923. While Mustafa Kemal objected to these nominations, the Assembly nonetheless elected Rauf Bey and Sabit Bey

³³⁴ *The New York Times*, 5 Oct. 1923, 1.

³³⁵ *Journal de Genève*, 6 Oct. 1923, 2.

³³⁶ *Corriere della Sera*, 5 Oct. 1923, 2.

³³⁷ *Los Angeles Times*, 14 Oct. 1923, 1.

³³⁸ Kinross, *Ataturk*, 432.

³³⁹ Ataturk, *Nutuk*, 798.

to the posts of vice-president of the Assembly and Home Secretary respectively, in preference to the government candidates. From this perspective, it was clear that there was a great confidence in Rauf Bey within the People's Party. This situation was unacceptable to Mustafa Kemal. He later provoked a crisis of government by persuading the existing ministers under the premiership of Ali Fethi Bey to resign, while also convincing other prominent members of the Assembly to refuse appointment to ministerial posts.³⁴⁰

Establishing the Republic of Turkey became possible after the government crisis on October 27, 1923. While Valentine Chirol emphasizes that the Cabinet was in collusion with Mustafa Kemal and suddenly resigned,³⁴¹ Tamkoc asserts that Mustafa Kemal precipitated a government crisis by asking Ali Fethi Bey to resign.³⁴² Like Tamkoc, Zurcher emphasizes that "Mustafa Kemal persuaded the government of Prime Minister Ali Fethi that this constituted a motion of no confidence, upon which the government resigned. The Assembly was automatically charged with replacing it with a new council of ministers, but once Mustafa Kemal had instructed his more prominent followers not to accept posts, this proved impossible."³⁴³

Ali Fethi Bey, the head of the last government of the National Assembly, resigned from his position with all his allies. The resignation of the government was an abrupt but necessary step because of losing the support of the Grand National Assembly. In his resignation letter Ali Fethi Bey pointed out that "they believe that a strong government which gets the entire support of the National Assembly is a certain necessity for concluding the internal and external duties of the

³⁴⁰ Sevkett Sureyya Aydemir, Tek Adam [The Single Man], (Istanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 2004), 154. Atatürk, *Nutuk*, 798-799. Shissler, *Between Two Empires*, 187. Kinross, *Atatürk*, 432. Zurcher, *Turkey*, 166.

³⁴¹ Chirol, *The Turkish Empire*, 460.

³⁴² Tamkoc, *The Warrior Diplomats*, 91.

³⁴³ Zurcher, *Turkey*, 166-167.

Turkish state with ease and success.” Ali Fethi Bey expressed the reasons for his resignation and the Assembly accepted it.³⁴⁴ This crisis was an intentional crisis which aimed to show the so-called weakness of the previous system of government. Metin Tamkoc describes this as a Kemalist trick: “Mustafa Kemal hoped that the Assembly responsible for the election of ministers was not going to be able to agree on a list of ministers. He would then suggest that the system of government be changed.”³⁴⁵ Mustafa Kemal later took advantage of this crisis to change the Constitution. These changes in the constitution enabled the establishment of the republic.³⁴⁶

2.3.3 Birth of the Republic

Because the assembly could not produce a list of ministers acceptable on October 27 and 28, 1923, Mustafa Kemal took action to solve the government crisis on behalf of consolidating his power. On the night of October 28, 1923, Mustafa Kemal and Ismet Pasha together completed a draft amendment of the constitution. One element of this amendment was “the form of the state is a republic.” Other amendments dealt with the election of the president of the republic and the selection of the members of the council of ministers.³⁴⁷

The next day, the People’s Party group gathered at 10 am to discuss the amendments proposed by Mustafa Kemal and Ismet Pasha. Everybody was sensible of the importance of this gathering which would be a key historical event. In his speech in the group, Mustafa Kemal

³⁴⁴ *Ayin Tarihi [History of Month] 1*, no. 2 (Oct. 1923), 130. *Vatan*, 28 Oct. 1923, 1.

³⁴⁵ Tamkoc, *The Warrior Diplomats*, 91.

³⁴⁶ Cecen, *Kemalism*, 92.

³⁴⁷ John M. Vanderlippe, *The Politics of Turkish Democracy: Ismet Inonu and the Formation of the Multi-Party System, 1938-1950*, (New York, NY: State University of New York Press, 2005), 15. Feridun Fazil Tulbentci, *Cumhuriyet Nasil Kuruldu? [How was the Republic established?]*, (Istanbul: Sel Yayinlari, 1955), 50-51. Ataturk, *Nutuk*, 802-803. Kinross, *Ataturk*, 433. Jung and Piccoli, *Turkey at the Crossroads*, 59. Tamkoc, *The Warrior Diplomats*, 91.

explained the difficulties of forming a government in the former system and he advised a republican model to remove these difficulties. The party group accepted this proposal in the group meeting.³⁴⁸ Many important figures of the Turkish War of Independence, such as Rauf Bey and Kazim Karabekir Pasha who would probably have opposed the move as premature, were not even in Ankara at that time.³⁴⁹ The group assembly ended at 8 pm and the discussions about the proposal started in the Grand National Assembly after that time.³⁵⁰ There are many irregularities in this decision. First of all, Mustafa Kemal took this decision with the deputies who were loyal to him, but almost half of the Assembly was not in Ankara while this urgent decision was taken. Secondly, the Kemalist approach to the Cabinet system was negative when the Second Group offered the separation of powers during the discussions about the duties and authorities of the Government. The Kemalist deputies criticized the opponents harshly in this subject as mentioned in the second section of this chapter.

The name of the regime was discussed on October 29, 1923. In the Grand National Assembly, Yunus Nadi Bey, pro-Kemalist deputy of Mugla and the head of the Commission of Constitution, explained the six articles which were proposed as changes in the Constitution. In his resolution, Yunus Nadi equated popular sovereignty to a republic in his perspective. According to him, this change would clarify the ambiguity of the name of Turkish regime. Yunus Nadi elucidated his point of view as “after accepting the republic, a president has to be chosen. The future government will be assigned by the President.”³⁵¹ After Yunus Nadi’s proposal was read in the Assembly, Vasif Bey, another Kemalist deputy of Saruhan, came to the pulpit. In his speech,

³⁴⁸ Atatürk, *Nutuk*, 812. Kinross, *Atatürk*, 433.

³⁴⁹ Howard, *History of Turkey*, 93.

³⁵⁰ *Ayin Tarihi I*, no. 2 (Oct. 1923), 131.

³⁵¹ *TBMM ZC*, 29 Oct. 1923, v.3, 89.

he summarized the difficulties of recent years which upset all except the Sultan and the Court. He accused the Sultan's regime as being apathetic to the people's sufferings.³⁵²

Religion and religious rituals were raised once again by the Kemalist deputies. Mehmed Emin Bey, pro-Kemalist deputy of Karahisarı Sarki, compared the similarities between the happy times of the period of Prophet Muhammad and the present times in Turkey: "A sword in one of his hands and a stick in the other hands, a great Prophet was sent for making a great revolution. For giving honor to unnamed people, freedom to enslaved people, and welfare to the miserable people; he established a government of God which was named as republic."³⁵³ After describing the period of Prophet Muhammad, Mehmed Emin Bey expressed his feelings about the historical period of Turkish people in those days as: "O my friends! After fourteen centuries, a great nation was chosen to establish a divine government and enabled a second miracle of God. This nation is Turkish nation. The government, which was established by Prophet Muhammad in Mecca fourteen century ago, was established in Ankara by the Turkish nation. In these glorious hours, as an old man, I demand God's blessing for this Government." Mehmed Emin Bey concluded his speech for asking to shout "long live the Republic" three times from the members of the Grand National Assembly.³⁵⁴ The deputies shouted "long live the Republic" three times after this demand. Sheikh Saffet Effendi, a prominent Kemalist deputy of Urfa, also shared the same religious sentiments as Mehmed Emin Bey. Saffet Effendi thought that the National Assembly returned to the happy times of Prophet Muhammad after accepting the Republic.³⁵⁵ After these speeches, the Turkish Republic was proclaimed by the deputies in the Grand National Assembly.

³⁵² *TBMM ZC*, 29 Oct. 1923, v.3, 93.

³⁵³ *TBMM ZC*, 29 Oct. 1923, v.3, 96.

³⁵⁴ *TBMM ZC*, 29 Oct. 1923, v.3, 96.

³⁵⁵ *TBMM ZC*, 29 Oct. 1923, v.3, 97.

After the form of Turkish regime was determined as a republic, the election for the presidency was fulfilled at 9 pm on October 29, 1923. In the election, Mustafa Kemal got 158 votes and was elected unanimously³⁵⁶ as the first president of Turkish Republic.³⁵⁷ This decision was accepted by the Assembly while Rauf Bey and other prominent leaders, such as Ali Fuat, Adnan, Refet and Kazim Karabekir, known to have some disagreements with Mustafa Kemal were out of Ankara.³⁵⁸ Metin Tamkoc interprets the election of Mustafa Kemal as the first president of the Republic of Turkey as:

The number of votes cast in the assembly for the election of Mustafa Kemal as president of the republic is indicative of his lack of popularity among the deputies. Announcing the result of the election, Ismet pasha said: "158 deputies have participated in the election of the President of the Republic. By 158 votes they have unanimously elected His Excellency the Gazi Mustafa Kemal Pasha, deputy for Ankara, President. The fact of matter was, however, that there were almost twice as many deputies in the Assembly. There were more than 100 abstentions. Moreover, following the general elections of August 1923, the Second Grand National Assembly was supposed to have been packed by Mustafa Kemal and was expected to be responsive to his will. The result, therefore, cannot be construed as a unanimous vote of approval of the establishment of the republic or as a unanimous vote of confidence in the first president of the republic. However, the fact that no one openly opposed his election indicated that Mustafa Kemal's opponents in the assembly were by this time totally intimidated."³⁵⁹

After the election, Mustafa Kemal thanked all the members of the Parliament and promised to progress together."³⁶⁰

³⁵⁶ The total number of the National Assembly was 286. Mustafa Kemal was elected unanimously by the present 158 deputies in the Assembly at that time. Barber, *The Sultans*, 276. Jung and Piccoli, *Turkey at the Crossroads*, 59. Bahrapour, *Turkey*, 15. Kinross, *Ataturk*, 433.

³⁵⁷ *TBMM ZC*, 29 Oct. 1923, v.3, 99. *Tevhid-i Efkar*, 30 Oct. 1923, 1. Davison, *The Modern Nations*, 127. Jung and Piccoli, *Turkey at the Crossroads*, 59. Miller, *The Ottoman Empire*, 555. Bahrapour, *Turkey*, 15.

³⁵⁸ Zurcher, *Turkey*, 177. Shissler, *Between Two Empires*, 187. Kinross, *Ataturk*, 432.

³⁵⁹ Tamkoc, *The Warrior Diplomats*, 91.

³⁶⁰ *TBMM ZC*, 29 Oct. 1923, v.3, 99-100.

2.3.4 After the Establishment of the Turkish Republic

The establishment of the Republic was accepted and the election of the presidency was fulfilled on October 29, 1923. After these steps, Mustafa Kemal, now elected as the first President of newly established republic, appointed Ismet Inonu, deputy of Malatya, to form the first cabinet of the Republic of Turkey on October 30, 1923.³⁶¹ Ismet Inonu offered his list of the Cabinet members to the Grand National Assembly for approval. The Assembly approved the list with all 166 votes.³⁶² According to Kemalist discourse, the new government immediately became stronger than the old system.³⁶³ However, if these two governments are compared, it is seen that there is no significant difference between them. Most of the ministers kept their position in the first Cabinet of the Republic.³⁶⁴ Therefore, the crisis of government realized Kemalist wishes but did not bring real change.

With a 101-gun salute the proclamation of the republic was announced throughout the whole country on October 29, 1923. Beyond this, the Grand National Assembly sent telegrams to public institutions to organize ceremonies after the Republic was accepted and Mustafa Kemal was

³⁶¹ *TBMM ZC*, 30 Oct. 1923, v.3, 103. Atatürk, *Nutuk*, 815. Altunisik and Tur, *Turkey*, 16. Jung and Piccoli, *Turkey at the Crossroads*, 59. Zürcher, *Turkey*, 167.

³⁶² *Vakit*, 31 Oct. 1923, 1. *Vatan*, 31 Oct. 1923, 1. *Tevhid-i Efkar*, 31 Oct. 1923, 1.

³⁶³ *Ayin Tarihi I*, no. 2 (Oct. 1923), 134-135.

³⁶⁴ For comparing these two cabinets: the ministers of Interior (Ali Fethi Bey), Health (Riza Nur Bey) and Public Works (Feyzi Bey) in the Ali Fethi Bey's government lost their offices in the Ismet Pasha's Cabinet. On the other hand, the Ministers of Sharia (Mustafa Fevzi Bey), Justice (Seyit Bey), Minister of Defence (Kazim Pasha), Chief of Defence (Fevzi Pasha), Foreign Affairs (Ismet Pasha), Finance (Hasan Fehmi Bey), Education (Ismail Safa Bey), Population Exchange (Mustafa Necati Bey), Commerce (Hasan Bey) kept their positions in the first government of the Republic. Therefore, the change between these two cabinets was very little. The list of the Ali Fethi Bey's Government *TBMM ZC*, 14 Aug. 1923, v. 1, 61-62. The list of Ismet Pasha's Government *TBMM ZC*, 30 Oct. 1923, v. 3, 103.

elected as the first President.³⁶⁵ People sent telegrams to Mustafa Kemal to congratulate him. Abdulmecid Effendi, the Caliph, sent a telegram to Mustafa Kemal with his hope for the best for the state and nation.³⁶⁶

The Kemalist press expressed the staged celebrations of people over the establishment of the Republic. In Ankara and Istanbul, people greeted this event with artillery salvos.³⁶⁷ People decorated their houses and stores with flags, flowers, and ornamentations. All government agencies were closed to join this enthusiasm. Torchlight processions were organized to increase popular enthusiasm. In the mosques, people prayed for the republic. The exclamation of “Long Live the Republic” was heard in everywhere.³⁶⁸ The newspaper *Akbaba* congratulated this happy event on November 1, 1923. In the article, the author mentioned about the rumors of the birth of republic. According to these rumors, the establishment of Republic was decided by a bunch of people without people’s support. Because of the concealment of this news from the nation, there were some negative thoughts circulated among the people. Celebrations stopped all these negative thoughts. The author was hopeful for the future of the republic. He advised people to protect this new-born baby together. Even though some people were not ready to accept this baby right now, they would care about it soon.³⁶⁹ Ismail Mustak expressed his happiness by accepting the republican regime in his article, “Proclamation of the Republic of Turkey,” in *Tanin*. He believed that the republic was the appropriate regime for the Turkish people.³⁷⁰ In *Vatan*, the new regime

³⁶⁵ *BCA*, 31 Oct. 1923, Document No: 8.65.35. *BCA*, 1 Nov. 1923, Document No: 13.109.2.

³⁶⁶ *İkdam*, 31 Oct. 1923, 1. *Vakit*, 2 Nov. 1923, 1.

³⁶⁷ *Aksam*, 31 Oct 1923, 1. *Vatan*, 30 Oct. 1923, 1.

³⁶⁸ *İkdam*, 31 Oct. 1923, 1.

³⁶⁹ “Kutlu olsun” [Happy Holiday], *Akbaba*, 1 Nov. 1923, 1.

³⁷⁰ Ismail Mustak, “Türkiye Cumhuriyeti’nin İlânı” [Proclamation of the Republic of Turkey], *Tanin*, 31 Oct. 1923, 1.

was congratulated as well. Turkey became the thirty-third republic out of eighty-four independent nations at that time. In the newspaper, the US was stated as the oldest republic and Turkey as the newest.³⁷¹

While the majority of the Turkish press, especially the staunch Kemalist press in Ankara, celebrated the establishment of the Republic, there was opposition in Istanbul to this decision because of its haste. According to Lord Kinross: “It aroused outspoken criticism from the Istanbul press, which was freer than that of Ankara – its master’s voice.”³⁷² In Nutuk, Mustafa Kemal condemned this opposition very harshly. He criticized his opponents, who gathered in Istanbul, as not sharing the same joyful feelings of the majority of people.³⁷³ While the Istanbul press was not against the concept of a republic, the Kemalist orthodoxy condemned this opposition group as anti-republican. This is another Kemalist distortion. Mustafa Kemal’s historic speech in 1927 was a political speech which aimed to explain the reasons for the purge of opponent. However, its political character mostly aimed to discredit and disgrace the opponents in the Turkish public opinion.

As mentioned above, the decision to establish a republic was taken while a number of notables from the independence war, such as Huseyin Rauf, Ali Fuat, Adnan, Refet and Kazim Karabekir were not in the Grand National Assembly. While Mustafa Kemal attacked the opposition for their anti-republican ideas, this is not true. Their objection was mostly related the lack of democratic process in the decision. They affirmed that the forms of a republic were not so important and did not themselves guarantee democracy.³⁷⁴ Zurcher describes the psychology of

³⁷¹ *Vatan*, 31 Oct. 1923, 1.

³⁷² Kinross, *Ataturk*, 434.

³⁷³ Ataturk, *Nutuk*, 791-793.

³⁷⁴ Shissler, *Between Two Empires*, 187.

the opponents very well: “they reacted angrily to the proclamation in interviews in the Istanbul press, calling the decision premature, and stressing that calling the state a republic did not in itself bring freedom and that the real difference was between despotism and democracy, whether under a republican or a monarchic system.”³⁷⁵

The Istanbul press, which was mostly opposed to Mustafa Kemal’s autocratic tendencies at that time, interviewed Rauf Bey about the urgency in the foundation of republic. Rauf Bey shared the same concerns as the Istanbul press. Moreover, Rauf Bey did not pay attention to the concept of a republic. He believed that any government which provided prosperity and freedom to the Turkish people would be acceptable.³⁷⁶ Rauf Bey drew attention a very important point: even though the name of regime was a republic, it could not necessarily bring freedom and prosperity to its people. Therefore, Rauf Bey indicated the democratic character of the regime was more important than its name.

The Istanbul press showed their dissatisfaction with the Kemalist decision in Ankara. The process was criticized by the newspaper *Vatan*. In *Vatan*, Ahmet Emin Bey, editor of the newspaper, enumerated the mistakes in his article. He criticized the attitude of the clique³⁷⁷ who gathered around Mustafa Kemal. According to him this clique did not act openly in this issue. Moreover, they concealed the initiatives for this change from the government. While the first Republican government was considered a stronger government than the previous one, the new government was formed of almost the same people who had resigned just a few days before.³⁷⁸

³⁷⁵ Zurcher, *Turkey*, 177.

³⁷⁶ *Tevhid-i Efkar*, 1 Nov. 1923, 1. *Vatan*, 1 Nov. 1923, 1.

³⁷⁷ This clique consisted of the deputies who were loyal to the Mustafa Kemal’s leadership undoubtedly.

³⁷⁸ Ahmed Emin, “Son Dahili Munakasalarin Tasfiyesi” [Elimination of the Last Internal Discussions], *Vatan*, 28 Nov. 1923, 1.

This same contradiction was mentioned by Velid Ebuzziya in his article in the newspaper *Tevhid-i Efkar*. In this article, Velid Ebuzziya doubted that the change of the form of government would make the state affairs better.³⁷⁹ In the newspaper *Tanin*, Huseyin Cahid in his article “Yasasin Cumhuriyet” (Long Live the Republic) believed that the republic could not survive with clapping, prayers, and carnivals if it did not change the mentalities of the statesmen. As a follower of republican ideology, he warned the people not to worship the term “republic” as an idol. According to him, the destiny of a republic would be in the hands of the people who would conduct it. Huseyin Cahid had some doubts about their capability.³⁸⁰ Moreover, Huseyin Cahid underlined the importance of freedom of speech. This would be impossible after the Law on the Maintenance of Order, which banned and closed indefinitely all opposition newspapers in March 1925.

The criticism by the Istanbul press of the rapid change of the form of the government was shared by some of pro-Kemalist press also. Necmeddin Sadik Bey had some concerns about the formation of the new regime, seeing urgency as a handicap. Beyond this concern, Necmeddin Sadik thought that if the government tried to change the structure of government in every crisis, this would be catastrophic for the country.³⁸¹ Moreover, Necmeddin Sadik thought that there was a partisan spirit in the Ankara press, which blamed every single critic as being against popular sovereignty. As a follower of the republic, Necmeddin Sadik described this sectarian attitude as: “Who is against the national sovereignty? Who are the followers of the Sultanate? Then, the people who criticize the Government are the followers of the Sultanate. We have to stamp out these people.” Necmeddin Sadik said that they did not invent such an absurd judgment but it sometimes

³⁷⁹ Velid Ebuzziya, “Efendiler, Devletin Adini Takdiniz, Isleri de Duzeltebilecek misiniz?” [Messieurs! You Entitled the State, will you be able to Ameliorate the Duties?], *Tevhid-i Efkar*, 31 Oct. 1923, 1.

³⁸⁰ Huseyin Cahid, “Yasasin Cumhuriyet” [Long Live Republic], *Tanin*, 31 Oct. 1923, 1.

³⁸¹ Necmeddin Sadik, “Turkiye Cumhuriyeti” [The Republic of Turkey], *Aksam*, 31 Oct. 1923, 1.

blew from Ankara this way. Lastly, Necmeddin Sadik did not believe that there was a group who were the followers of the Sultanate in Istanbul. According to him, the sectarian attitude of the Ankara press was far more harmful for the new regime.³⁸² This sectarian attitude was seen as stifling concerns in the Istanbul press about the decision.³⁸³ Necmeddin Sadik Bey, as a staunch Kemalist in his political life, proved a very important reality with his comment in here. The clique gathered around Mustafa Kemal stifled all opposition to their ideology. The victory of the Kemalist majority over its opponents concluded by establishing an autocracy in 1926. This autocracy was the consequence of this Ankara clique.

The Kemalist press in Ankara targeted Rauf Bey as the head of the dissidents in Istanbul. *Yeni Gun* was the foremost newspaper which attacked Kemal's opponents. On November 2, 1923, Yunus Nadi Bey, the editor of *Yeni Gun* and deputy of Mugla, condemned Rauf Bey as a deceptive man who wanted to confuse the public. Yunus Nadi believed that there was an opposition group bitter over the establishment of a republic in Istanbul. He threatened "to tear down the palaces of these opponents over their heads." Yunus Nadi condemned Rauf Bey and his friends as "stooges to the ex-Court."³⁸⁴ In another article, "*Vuzuh, Sarahat ve Katiyet Lazimdir*", Yunus Nadi pointed out that the long interview of Rauf Bey but mentioned nothing about the Republic. Yunus Nadi asked Rauf Bey to be clear if he opposed the establishment of the Republic.³⁸⁵ Rauf Bey responded to these allegations in a moderate way. He underlined that everybody was free in their opinions.

³⁸² Necmeddin Sadik, "Tenkide Biraz Tahammul Etmelidir" [Critiques must be tolerated a little], *Aksam*, 4 Nov. 1923, 1.

³⁸³ *Vatan*, 3 Nov. 1923, 1.

³⁸⁴ *Yeni Gun*, 2 Nov. 1923, 1.

³⁸⁵ Yunus Nadi, "Vuzuh, Sarahat ve Katiyet Lazimdir" [The Clarity, Clearness, and Certainty are needed], *Yeni Gun*, 4 Nov. 1923, 1.

According to Rauf Bey, the only duty of Turkish press was to illuminate the youth and people of Turkey on the basis of truth.³⁸⁶ Ahmet Agaoglu, pro-Kemalist deputy of Kars, likewise criticized Rauf Bey for his ambivalent attitude towards the Republic.³⁸⁷

When Rauf Bey returned to the Assembly at the end of November 1923, he was subjected to harsh criticisms by Kemalist loyalists. In the group discussion on November 22, 1923, he was interrogated by the Kemalist deputies. In this meeting Rauf Bey clarified that he was in favor of the Republic. According to him, unconditional national sovereignty was the greatest possible blessing for the country. When Rauf Bey said that he hoped he would be able to continue to work with his colleagues in the People's Party for the good of the country, Ahmet Agaoglu attacked him sharply. Ahmet Agaoglu described Rauf Bey as making anti-republican statements to the press in anger. Agaoglu stressed that if Rauf Bey would not recant his statements about the republic as premature and the form of a republic as not particularly important, this would end their friendship. Ahmet Agaoglu asked why Rauf Bey hadn't raised similar objections to the abolition of the sultanate which had been decided upon even more quickly. "Rauf," said Agaoglu, "was like a man who says he wants a child and then laments that it has been born too fast- one can only take it to mean that he didn't really want the child."³⁸⁸ After these discussions, Rauf Bey tried to convince the Assembly members that as a republican he was against autocracy.³⁸⁹ The case of Rauf Bey shows the Kemalist pressure on freedom of speech. Even though Rauf Bey, a deputy in the

³⁸⁶ "Yeni Gun'un Nesriyati Hakkinda Rauf Bey Ne Diyor?" [What did Rauf Bey Say about the Publications of Yeni Gun], *Aksam*, 6 Nov. 1923, 1.

³⁸⁷ Ahmed Agaoglu, "Rauf Beyefendinin Beyanati Munasebetiyle" [On the Occasion of the Explanations of Rauf Bey], *Aksam*, 8 Nov. 1923, 1.

³⁸⁸ Shissler, *Between Two Empires*, 187.

³⁸⁹ *Ayin Tarihi I*, no. 3 (Nov. 1923), 319.

Assembly and one of the prominent figures of Turkish War of Independence, could be a target of Kemalist' wrath, the situation of the ordinary people was far worse.

The change of the regime created confusion. Falih Rifki described the attitude of imams who were bewildered. When the Sultanate existed, they were praying for the perpetuity of the Sultanate. However, they were unsure whether to pray for the new regime.³⁹⁰ Erasing the remains of the ex-Sultanate would be another goal for the Kemalist movement. Ekrem Bey, deputy of Rize, proposed a resolution to the Grand National Assembly to remove all tughras³⁹¹ from official buildings and place republican badges instead.³⁹² As a result, Kemalists aimed to wipe out all the remnants of the ex-regime to establish the republican regime in society. The extreme hatred to the Ottoman period caused the annihilation of many historical remnants at that time.

The establishment of a republic in Turkey was observed by the foreign press intensely. *The New York Times* announced the change of the regime in Turkey the day after the Grand National Assembly accepted the resolution, and included Mustafa Kemal's unanimous election.³⁹³ *Corriere della Sera* expressed that the ex-Government lost its credit and resigned, therefore, the establishment of the Republic came after this resignation.³⁹⁴ *Le Temps* mentioned the declaration of a republic and the election of a president on October 31, 1922.³⁹⁵ *Journal de Genève* pointed out that the majoring party in the Grand National Assembly proclaimed the republic in Turkey.³⁹⁶

³⁹⁰ Falih Rifki, "Padisahim Cok Yasa" [Long Live my Sultan], *Aksam*, 5 Dec. 1923, 1.

³⁹¹ Tughra: A calligraphic signature of an Ottoman sultan that was affixed to official documents, carved on his seal, and stamped on coins and inscribed on some stamps issued during his reign.

³⁹² *TBMM ZC*, 5 Jan. 1924, v.4, 497-498.

³⁹³ *The New York Times*, 30 Oct. 1923, 1.

³⁹⁴ *Corriere della Sera*, 30 Oct. 1923, 2.

³⁹⁵ *Le Temps*, 31 Oct. 1923, 2.

³⁹⁶ *Journal de Genève*, 31 Oct. 1923, 8.

The interpretation of *Journal de Genève* is particularly interesting, because at that time there was not any other party besides the People's Party of Mustafa Kemal in the Turkish Grand National Assembly. The first cabinet of the Turkish republic was another subject in the foreign press. *Journal de Genève* mentioned that the cabinet was approved unanimously by the Assembly.³⁹⁷ *Le Temps* gave the entire list of the Ismet Pasha's cabinet in its copy on November 1, 1923.³⁹⁸

Turkey was called the "Anatolian Republic" by *the New York Times* when it was established. The attitude of the Turkish leaders was seen as imitating the founding fathers of the United States, as *the New York Times* reported that the Ankara Government liked to compare itself with America in the first days of its national life and the Turkish leaders considered themselves as "Washingtons, Hamiltons or Jeffersons." These new leaders did not find their political prototypes in the Turkish history, like Osman Ghazi, Suleiman the Magnificent or Abdul Hamid II.³⁹⁹

In conclusion, after the abolition of the Sultanate on November 1, 1922, the Kemalist movement took another step by establishing the Republic on October 29, 1923. Mustafa Kemal manipulated the crisis of government to carry out a *fait accompli* in the change of regime. When the Assembly was gathered on October 29, 1923, the members who were loyal to Mustafa Kemal dominated it. Even though there was only a single party in the Assembly at that time, the opponents within the People's Party were not in Ankara while the Republic was declared. Mustafa Kemal was elected as the first President of Turkey by 158 votes. He was elected unanimously in the Assembly, but 132 members of Assembly were in absentia. The Turkish Press in Istanbul showed its reluctance to the establishment of republic. According to the newspapers in Istanbul, this

³⁹⁷ *Journal de Genève*, 31 Oct. 1923, 8.

³⁹⁸ *Le Temps*, 1 Nov. 1923, 2.

³⁹⁹ *The New York Times*, 31 Oct. 1923, 1.

decision was taken in hurry and not discussed enough by society. Rauf Bey, the head of the future opposition movement, shared the feelings of the Istanbul press. He was criticized harshly by the Ankara press which attacked him as “anti-republican.” Mustafa Kemal overcame this opposition and kept going on his political agenda after the establishment of the Republic. The final attack to the traditional structure in Turkish politics would be the abolition of the Caliphate. After abolition of the Caliphate, Mustafa Kemal would achieve the elimination of his traditional rivals totally.

2.4 Abolition of the Ottoman Caliphate in March 1924

At the beginning of the Turkish War of Independence, Kemalists were seen as loyalist to the traditional institutions, the Sultanate and Caliphate. When the Grand National Assembly was inaugurated on April 23, 1920, Kemalists were establishing contact and coming to a conciliation with the sultan-caliph. They showed their loyalty to Sultan Mehmed VI when the Assembly was inaugurated.⁴⁰⁰ The following day Mustafa Kemal summarized the general feeling of their movement in the Assembly. He pointed out that the only way to rescue the state and Sultan was the collaboration of all patriots and intellectuals who were deeply upset by the occupation of the state, a horrible situation for the people of the Ottoman Empire.⁴⁰¹ Mustafa Kemal expressed his loyalty to the Sultan-Caliph as: “I display and assure to be loyal forever to the Caliphate and Sultanate until the last day of my life with great obedience. I pray God to rescue the Sultan from all disasters and pray for his health.”⁴⁰² However, the relationship between Kemalists and the last Sultan deteriorated during the National Struggle. As a result of this deterioration, the Ottoman

⁴⁰⁰ Berkes, *Development of Secularism*, 444. Lewis, *The Emergence*, 246.

⁴⁰¹ *TBMM ZC*, 24 Apr. 1920, v.1, 8.

⁴⁰² *TBMM ZC*, 24 Apr. 1920, v.1, 16.

Sultanate was abolished by the Grand National Assembly on November 1, 1922. This abolition separated the Caliphate from the Sultanate.

After the abolition of the Sultanate in November 1922, the traditional power of religious authorities diminished but not totally end. The Kemalist regime wanted to establish a Caliphate without temporal power. The new Caliph was supposed to be a solely spiritual leader and dependent on the Government of the Grand National Assembly by Kemalists.⁴⁰³ However, the political competition between Ankara and Istanbul made the office of Caliphate the center of opposition to the Kemalist government. This section scrutinizes the importance of the abolition of the Caliphate on the way of the establishment of the Kemalist autocracy.

2.4.1 Historical Background of the Caliphate and the Ottoman Caliphate

A caliphate is the traditional Islamic form of government, presided over by a caliph, a successor of Prophet Muhammad. The Caliph was a title signifying the religious and political preeminence of a Muslim ruler over other Muslim rulers.⁴⁰⁴ After the Turkish invasion of Cairo led by Selim I, Yavuz Sultan Selim, in 1517, the Ottoman Dynasty took control of the Caliphate of all Muslims.⁴⁰⁵ The Ottoman Sultans acquired the status of “Custodians of the Holy Places”- of Mecca and Medina- after they conquered the Islamic core lands of Syria, Egypt, and the Hejaz.⁴⁰⁶

While the Ottoman Caliphate began after the Turkish invasion of Egypt in 1517 and the title of Caliph was used by the Ottoman Sultans after that year, the Office of Caliphate occupied a minor place in the Ottoman diplomatic arsenal. When the Ottoman Empire became relatively weak

⁴⁰³ Allen, *The Turkish Transformation*, 57.

⁴⁰⁴ Somel, *Historical Dictionary*, 48-49.

⁴⁰⁵ Heper, *Historical Dictionary*, 28.

⁴⁰⁶ Somel, *Historical Dictionary*, 48-49.

in the eighteenth century, real Ottoman claims to the caliphate were made by the Ottoman Sultans at that time. The Kucuk Kaynarca Treaty of 1774 was the first example of using the power of the Caliphate in the political arena. During the negotiations over this treaty, the Ottomans used the importance of the Caliphate against Russia. As a consequence of this Treaty, Russia recognized the Ottoman Sultan as caliph of the Crimean Tatars. After the Treaty of Kucuk Kaynarca, the title of Caliph, as signifying the religious head of the worldwide Muslim community, became a permanent attribute of Ottoman sultans.⁴⁰⁷

In the nineteenth century the Ottoman Caliphate became useful for the Ottoman rulers who tried to hold together the Muslim peoples of the empire. Sultan Abdulaziz (1861-1876) was the first Ottoman ruler to adopt a pan-Islamic approach in his relations with other Muslim countries. He tried to appeal to a shared Islam as the basis for concerted action with the other countries under his leadership as the caliph of all Muslims. However, Sultan Abdulhamid II (1876- 1909) was the Ottoman Sultan who most emphasized the caliphate. Both Sultans Abdulaziz and Abdulhamid II made use of the title for political and diplomatic purposes. Sultan Abdulhamid II used the caliphate as an instrument during the Ottoman-Russian War of 1877-1878. The Ottoman Caliphate was likewise used during the World War I as a political instrument. Sultan Mehmed V declared a holy war against the Allies in his capacity as the caliph of all Muslims when the Ottoman Empire entered the war on the side of the Central Powers in 1914.⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰⁷ Donald Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire, 1700-1922*, 2nd ed., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 83. Somel, *Historical Dictionary*, 48-49. Heper, *Historical Dictionary*, 28.

⁴⁰⁸ Somel, *Historical Dictionary*, 48-49. Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire*, 84.

2.4.2 Kemalist Approach to the Office of Caliphate During the Turkish War of Independence

At the early stage of the National Struggle, one of goals of the British invasion was considered as to annihilate the Office of Caliphate by the Kemalist deputies. The National Assembly published a declaration, aimed at gaining popular support, against to the British occupation on May 9, 1920. In this declaration, Mufid Effendi, pro-Kemalist deputy of Kirsehir, underlined that: “When the British, who are the mortal enemy and merciless executioner of Islam, took a decision to annihilate our Islamic Caliphate, to rule over the entire World, and to destroy Muslims completely, it is not excusable not to struggle against them.”⁴⁰⁹

The importance of the Caliphate was stressed many times by the deputies – both Kemalists and their opposition- in the Grand National Assembly. Abdulkadir Kemali Bey, deputy of Kastamonu and later prominent opponent to the Kemalist majority, hailed the geographical and political unity of the Muslim nations in the Assembly. In his speech, he said that the Arab government established in Iraq could not be separated from the Ankara Government. Moreover, he added that Iraq, Syria, and all Arabia were loyal to Anatolia as a result of religious feelings and all people in Africa and Arabia had never thought of being apart from the Caliphate.⁴¹⁰ Mustafa Bey, deputy of Karahisar-i Sarki, expressed this as: “...to believe in the needlessness of the Caliphate means to play into British and French hands, who are the enemies of the Caliphate; and to discredit Turks from the Muslim World.”⁴¹¹ Mustafa Kemal said: “As you know, the British always need a tool, to ease their press against the Islamic World, which is under their captivity.

⁴⁰⁹ *TBMM ZC*, 9 May 1920, v.1, 247.

⁴¹⁰ *TBMM ZC*, 15 Nov. 1920, v.5, 398.

⁴¹¹ *TBMM ZC*, 15 Feb. 1921, v.8, 233.

They show this need from time to time. In the sight of the British, this valuable tool is the person they will seat as the head of the Caliphate by them.”⁴¹²

When the members of the National Assembly started to criticize the last Sultan Mehmed VI and the Sultanate in mid of 1921, the Caliphate was still considered a significant and sacred position by them. Although both positions were held by Sultan Mehmed VI, he lost his credit as a Sultan-Caliph. Deputies had a great loyalty and respect to the Caliphate but not the personality of the last Sultan. As an example, Huseyin Avni Bey, deputy of Erzurum and future leader of the opposition, discredited the Sultanate and credited the Caliphate in his speech on November 28, 1921. In this speech Huseyin Avni Bey pointed out a sacred Office existed only in Turkey. That was the Caliphate. He reminded the other deputies that they could rescue the Caliphate from captivity. As Huseyin Avni Bey said, the last Sultan was a traitor and did not deserve to hold the title of Caliph. Moreover, he added that the Caliphate was likewise holy and vacant.⁴¹³ Yusuf Ziya Bey, deputy of Bitlis and another prominent opponent, had the same opinion as Huseyin Avni Bey. In his speech, Yusuf Ziya Bey said: “Let’s declare to the World as a sole reality that we have a great respect and love for the Caliphate in our hearts. That Office is very valuable and exalted in our opinions. We will be dignified guards of that Office.”⁴¹⁴

Mustafa Kemal differentiated the Caliphate from the Sultanate. He also criticized the attitude of Sultan Mehmed VI, who collaborated with Turkey’s enemies. Mustafa Kemal declared that the Caliphate was not only holy for the Turkish nation, but also for the rest of the Muslim World. He held that: “the future person, who will take up the Office of Caliphate, will be the

⁴¹² *TBMM ZC*, 29 Jan. 1921, v.7, 414.

⁴¹³ *TBMM ZC*, 28 Nov. 1921, v.14, 369-372.

⁴¹⁴ *TBMM ZC*, 29 Nov. 1921, v.14, 397.

servant of the nation, not the master of the nation.”⁴¹⁵ In another speech, Mustafa Kemal declared his loyalty to the Caliphate like the rest of the members of the National Assembly: “Yes we are devoted to the Caliphate. Because the Office of Caliphate and Sultanate does not belong to anyone. It belongs to the Turkish nation directly with the backing of the entire Muslim World. That Office is ours, we have protected it and we will until the end.”⁴¹⁶ However, Mustafa Kemal’s promises lasted until he believed that the Caliphate was an obstacle. The removal of this obstacle will be covered in the next section.

2.4.3 Establishing a Caliphate without Temporal Power: The End of Sultanate and the Last Caliph

After the Turkish victory at Dumlupinar in August 1922, a Turkish reoccupation of Izmir, and the evacuation of Anatolia by the Greeks in September 1922, Mustafa Kemal consolidated his power both at home and abroad.⁴¹⁷ As a consequences of this victory, the Greek invasion in western Turkey terminated and the Ankara Government was invited to the peace conference in Lausanne, Switzerland. The British Government invited the Istanbul Government to the Peace Conference also. To remove this duality in the Peace Treaty, Kemalists resolved to abolish the sultanate by separating it from the caliphate.⁴¹⁸

On October 30, 1922, Riza Nur and 78 of his friends introduced a motion, on the collapse of the Ottoman Empire to the Grand National Assembly. Supported by a supplementary motion

⁴¹⁵ *TBMM ZC*, 1 Dec. 1921, v.14, 430.

⁴¹⁶ *TBMM ZC*, 6 Mar. 1922, v.18, 72.

⁴¹⁷ Butler, *Shadow of the Sultan’s Realm*, 227. Lewis, *The Emergence*, 248. Zürcher, *Turkey*, 155. Barlas, *Etatism and Diplomacy*, 121. Miller, *The Ottoman Empire*, 555.

⁴¹⁸ Cecen, *Kemalism*, 88. Sonyel, *Turkish Diplomacy*, 186. Davison, *The Modern Nations*, 125. Allen, *The Turkish Transformation*, 56. Orga, *Phoenix Ascendant*, 126.

by Huseyin Avni Bey this motion resulted in the drafting of a bill abolishing the Sultanate.⁴¹⁹ In the sixth article of the resolution of Riza Nur, it was declared that the new Caliph would be elected by the National Assembly from the members of the Ottoman Dynasty.⁴²⁰ Mustafa Kemal explained his positive thoughts about this subject in the Assembly. He believed that the Caliphate was the most important matter among the Muslim nations. Beyond this, the Caliphate was an emirate tying together the Muslim people.⁴²¹ He also prophesied that the Caliphate would be very prosperous for the Turkish State and the entire Muslim World.⁴²²

The Caliphate was seen as a connection between all Muslims. The members of the National Assembly were also aware of this idea. Vehbi Efendi, a conservative deputy of Konya, summarized his thoughts as: "...all Muslims have a spiritual connection to the Caliphate. Breaking this connection is impossible. When all of the Muslims will perish – God forbid from all disasters-, that spiritual connection would be at a standstill. Otherwise, all Muslims, from the West to the East, have a spiritual connection in this way.”⁴²³

After the flight of the last Sultan, Mehmed VI, on November 17, 1922, the Office of the Caliphate became vacant. On November 18, 1922, the Grand National Assembly in Ankara gathered to appoint a new Caliph.⁴²⁴ During the discussions the last Sultan was criticized harshly. Rauf Bey, the head of Ankara Government, condemned Sultan Mehmed VI as a traitor who left the Caliphate to British protection. According to him, this kind of treason was not seen before in

⁴¹⁹ Sonyel, *Turkish Diplomacy*, 186.

⁴²⁰ *TBMM ZC*, 1 Nov. 1922, v.24, 304.

⁴²¹ *TBMM ZC*, 1 Nov. 1922, v.24, 306.

⁴²² *TBMM ZC*, 1 Nov. 1922, v.24, 311.

⁴²³ *TBMM ZC*, 3 Nov. 1922, v.24, 348.

⁴²⁴ Kalaycioglu, *Turkish Dynamics*, 40. Lewis, *The Emergence*, 254. Orga, *Phoenix Ascendant*, 128. Davison, *The Modern Nations*, 125. Chirol, *The Turkish Empire*, 447.

the Turkish history.⁴²⁵ The vacant Caliphate would not be good for the nation; therefore, a new Caliph had to be appointed. Vehbi Effendi, the Minister of Sharia, wrote a fatwa which described the dethronement of Sultan Mehmed VI as the Caliph of Muslims.⁴²⁶ In the elections, Abdulmecid Effendi got 148 votes out of 162 from the members of the Assembly and was appointed as the new Caliph by the Ankara Government.⁴²⁷ The Government employed imams and preachers to publicize the election of the Caliph and the ceremony organized in honor of the Caliph to all people in Turkey.⁴²⁸

2.4.4 Struggle Between Ankara and Istanbul : Last Caliph as a Powerhouse for the Opposition

The Sultanate was abolished in November 1922, but the Caliphate still existed. This institution of the Caliphate, which attracted as much loyalty as the Sultanate among the mass of Turkish people, was still an obstacle to Mustafa Kemal's establishing his personal autocracy. After the election of the last Caliph on November 18, 1922, the political struggle between the conservatives and Kemalists took another shape. According to the Kemalist assertion, the Caliph in Istanbul became the center for opposition to them. Price emphasizes this situation as: "He – Abdulmecid- became the center of intrigue, and Nationalists, like Rauf Bey, who nevertheless favored monarchy, were suspected of aiming to set the Caliph up as a constitutional sovereign."⁴²⁹ Like Price, Orga points out this political struggle between the Kemalist government in Ankara and the opposition in Istanbul as: "Mustafa Kemal was only too well aware of the danger of the

⁴²⁵ *TBMM ZC*, 18 Nov. 1922, v.24, 563.

⁴²⁶ *TBMM ZC*, 18 Nov. 1922, v.24, 564.

⁴²⁷ *TBMM ZC*, 18 Nov. 1922, v.24, 565. *BCA*, 19 Nov. 1922, Document No: 13.113.62. *Vakit*, 20 Nov. 1922, 1.

⁴²⁸ *BCA*; 22 Nov. 1922, Document no: 13.113.63. *BCA*, 14 Dec. 1922, Document no: 13.113.66.

⁴²⁹ Price, *A History of Turkey*, 128.

Caliph's popularity spreading. In Istanbul Caliph Abdulmecid, and a group of Mustafa Kemal's most formidable opponents, were doing their best to form a sovereign and religious movement which, if unchecked, would defeat Mustafa Kemal."⁴³⁰ As an opportunist, he waited for an opportunity to abolish the Caliphate and consolidate his power within the state.

Mustafa Kemal was not opposed to the Caliphate when the last Caliph was elected by the Assembly in November 1922. However, he started to explore possibilities of removing this obstacle to his autocracy in January 1923. Mustafa Kemal held a press conference in Izmit on January 16/17, 1923, with the representatives of the Istanbul press, always seen as troublemakers for Kemalists. In this conference, there were more than 60 subjects discussed, but Mustafa Kemal particularly wanted to hear their opinions about the Caliphate. He declared that the Turkish state had no relevance with the Caliph in this conference.⁴³¹ This conference probed the possibility of removing the Caliphate and measured the reactions of prominent journalists should this situation happen.

The Istanbul press stressed the importance of this meeting. In *Aksam*, one of the major Kemalist papers in Istanbul, this meeting was reported as: "The Savior Ghazi Mustafa Kemal Pasha laid out his thoughts about national sovereignty, the Caliphate, political reaction, and welfare of the people in an extraordinary speech." *Aksam* underlined Mustafa Kemal's view that "the nation will not give its rights to any person regardless of his name and position. The National Assembly does not belong to the Caliph; it belongs to the nation only."⁴³² The conservative

⁴³⁰ Orga, *Phoenix Ascendant*, 145.

⁴³¹ Ismail Arar, Ataturk'un Izmit Basın Toplantısı [The Izmit Press Conference of Ataturk], (Istanbul: Istanbul Matbaası, 1969), 7-9.

⁴³² *Aksam*, 21 Jan. 1923, 1.

newspaper *Tevhid-i Efkar* also discussed this conference. In the details of its news, *Tevhid-i Efkar* pointed out that the Caliphate would be kept by the Turkish Assembly.”⁴³³

Opponents were aware of Mustafa Kemal’s ambitions to strengthen his position. Ismail Sukru Efendi, a prominent conservative deputy of Karahisari Sahib, wrote a pamphlet, “Hilafet-i Islamiye ve Buyuk Millet Meclisi” (The Islamic Caliphate and the Grand National Assembly), on the importance of the Caliphate. In this pamphlet, Sukru Efendi summarized the conservative point of view as: “...the Caliphate belongs to the Assembly; the Assembly belongs to the Caliphate.”⁴³⁴ According to conservatives, the Caliph should be the head of the state, angering Mustafa Kemal. In Nutuk, he condemned this as a reactionary movement, which wanted to see the Caliph as a new Sultan.⁴³⁵ Kemalists demanded legal proceedings over this pamphlet and Ismail Sukru Effendi.⁴³⁶

When the first session of the Grand National Assembly was completed in April 1923, Mustafa Kemal had a chance to prevent opponents from attending the second session of the Assembly. Opponents were purged after the elections which were controlled strictly by Kemalists.⁴³⁷ The purge of the members of the Second Group enabled Mustafa Kemal to carry out his future projects. Despite the consolidation of Mustafa Kemal’s hold on power that the elections of June-July 1923 represented, another opposition emerged after the second period of the Assembly which was convened on August 11, 1923.⁴³⁸ The establishment of the Republic caused some disquiet within the Kemalist party. The faction, which was led by like Rauf Bey and Kazim

⁴³³ *Tevhid-i Efkar*, 21 Jan. 1923, 1.

⁴³⁴ Tuncay, *Turkiye Cumhuriyeti’nde*, 57.

⁴³⁵ Ataturk, *Nutuk*, 685.

⁴³⁶ *BCA*, 20 Aug. 1923, Folder: 864, Document no: 86.566.4.

⁴³⁷ Altunisik and Tur, *Turkey*, 16. Zurcher, *Turkey*, 167. Tamkoc, *The Warrior Diplomats*, 90.

⁴³⁸ Tamkoc, *The Warrior Diplomats*, 91.

Karabekir Pasha, started their opposition to Mustafa Kemal because of his authoritarian tendencies.⁴³⁹

While the establishment of the Republic was the first round between the Kemalist group and the opposition, discussions about the abolition of the Caliphate became the second round between these two groups within the same party. The Kemalist approach on this subject stressed the uselessness of the Caliphate as an obsolete institution.⁴⁴⁰ On the other hand, an alternative approach sees this situation as a struggle for power between Ankara and Istanbul.⁴⁴¹ As an alternative approach, Mete Tuncay points out that the abolition of Caliphate was a “show of strength” of Mustafa Kemal, who wanted to get his power accepted by the Turkish society. This is a part of a process by which Mustafa Kemal wanted to identify the Republic and reforms with his personality.⁴⁴²

As it mentioned in the previous section, the establishment of the Turkish Republic generated some reluctance among the opponents in Istanbul. Rauf Bey criticized the haste of the declaration of the Republic in *Tevhid-i Efkar* and *Vatan* newspapers.⁴⁴³ After the establishment of the republic, hopes of the conservative elite were centered on the caliphate to arrest further drastic reorganization of the state and society. This elite hoped that the caliphate could also be used to return to the traditional system of government. Abdulmecid, who was in a precarious position in Istanbul, became the center of heated controversy.⁴⁴⁴

⁴³⁹ Shissler, *Between Two Empires*, 187.

⁴⁴⁰ Mumcu, *Ataturk ve Cagdaslama*, 9.

⁴⁴¹ Nisanyan, *Yanlis Cumhuriyet*, 105.

⁴⁴² Tuncay, *Turkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde*, 71.

⁴⁴³ *Tevhid-i Efkar*, 1 Nov. 1923, 1. *Vatan*, 1 Nov. 1923, 1.

⁴⁴⁴ Tamkoc, *The Warrior Diplomats*, 92. Chirol, *The Turkish Empire*, 460. Allen, *The Turkish Transformation*, 58.

Ismet Inonu, close friend of Ataturk and the second president of Turkey, confessed that the abolition of the Caliphate was a political struggle. In his memoirs, Ismet Pasha recounted the contacts and connections of the Caliph in Istanbul which worried Mustafa Kemal and all of his friends. The attitude of the Caliph and the existence of the Caliphate at the same time with the Republic were seen very objectionable.⁴⁴⁵ Therefore, after the Republic was established, the Caliphate had to be removed from the political arena. Zurcher emphasizes the struggle between Ankara and Istanbul on the ground of politics as: “The anti-republican feeling was partly fuelled by concern over the future of the caliph. Many people, certainly in Istanbul, were emotionally attached to the dynasty, but it was also felt that the caliph was the only possible counterweight to Mustafa Kemal’s dominance of the political scene. It was – rightly- feared that the proclamation of the republic sounded the death knell of the caliphate.”⁴⁴⁶ Like Zurcher, Metin Tamkoc also emphasizes the political struggle between these two groups as: “the conservative majority of the people and their spokesmen, the educated elite, centered in Istanbul. Although they appeared to have accepted the fait accompli in the establishment of the Republic, they were not to give up the fight completely. Their only remaining source of hope and strength was the institution of the Caliphate, which, if cleverly manipulated, could evoke so strong a religious reaction on the part of the masses that Mustafa Kemal would be compelled to relinquish the state power and agree to a return to the theocratic system of government.”⁴⁴⁷ On the other hand, Roderic Davison emphasizes

⁴⁴⁵ Ismet Inonu, *Ismet Inonu’nun Hatiralari: Cumhuriyetin İlk Yillari (1923-1938)* [*Memoirs of Ismet Inonu: The first Years of the Republic*], (Istanbul: Cumhuriyet Gazetesi Yayinlari, 1998), 47.

⁴⁴⁶ Zurcher, *Turkey*, 168.

⁴⁴⁷ Tamkoc, *The Warrior Diplomats*, 24.

this struggle more ideological rather than political as: “the caliph Abdulmecid might serve as a focal point for opponents of the republic, of innovation, of secularization, of Kemal.”⁴⁴⁸

In these days, a vigorous campaign against the Caliph and all the members of the House of Osman who were still living in Turkey appeared in the Kemalist press.⁴⁴⁹ A rumor about the resignation of the Caliph Abdulmecid was spread in the Kemalist press. The Ankara papers, especially *Yeni Gun*, spread these rumors.⁴⁵⁰ They were declared untrue by Abdulmecid Efendi, the Caliph. He indicated that he did not see any reason to resign while believers showed kindness to him.⁴⁵¹ Abdulmecid Efendi was very annoyed by the attitude of the newspaper *Yeni Gun*.⁴⁵² *Tevhid-i Efkar*, a conservative newspaper in Istanbul, reported the Caliph’s declaration that he was elected to his Office legitimately and he would keep his position because the Islamic World was still in favor of him. He also underlined that resignation would be ingratitude to people’s kindness.⁴⁵³ *Le Temps* reported this rumor in its article which referred to the news published in *Aksam*. According to the *Le Temps*, the Caliph would not resign from his position.⁴⁵⁴ However, the pro-Kemalist newspaper *Aksam* repeated this rumor which agitated public opinion. On November 9, 1923, *Aksam* announced that “the resignation of His Excellency Caliph was strongly probable.” According to the paper, when the resignation happened, representatives of all Muslim

⁴⁴⁸ Davison, *The Modern Nations*, 129.

⁴⁴⁹ Chirol, *The Turkish Empire*, 462.

⁴⁵⁰ *Vatan*, 5 Nov. 1923, 1.

⁴⁵¹ *Vatan*, 9 Nov. 1923, 1. *Vakit*, 9 Nov. 1923, 1.

⁴⁵² *BCA*; 15 Nov. 1923, Folder: 24469, Document no: 202.381.9.

⁴⁵³ *Tevhid-i Efkar*, 9 Nov. 1923, 1.

⁴⁵⁴ *Le Temps*, 11 Nov. 1923, 2.

nations would gather in Istanbul to elect the new Caliph.”⁴⁵⁵ The next day, *Aksam* announced that the alteration of the form of the Caliphate was absolute.⁴⁵⁶

This rumor stimulated conservatives. In November the President of the Istanbul Bar Association, Lutfi Fikri Bey, sent an open letter to the press in which he pleaded for a more influential position for the Caliph,⁴⁵⁷ published on November 10, 1923, in the newspaper *Tanin*. In this letter, Lutfi Fikri Bey referred to rumors about the resignation of the Caliph. It would be suicide for Turks if the Caliph resigned. According to Lutfi Fikri, the Caliphate was a “spiritual treasure” which was very important to the Muslim world.⁴⁵⁸ Huseyin Cahid supported Lutfi Fikri Bey. In his article in *Tanin*, Huseyin Cahid described the Caliphate as the source of power of Turks, and suicide if the Caliphate was expelled from the country.⁴⁵⁹ Bernard Lewis refers the striking points of Huseyin Cahid Bey’s article as: “No great intelligence is necessary to understand that if we lose the Caliphate, the state of Turkey, with its five or ten million inhabitants, would lose all importance in the world of Islam, and in the eyes of European politics we would sink to the rank of a petty and insignificant state... The Caliphate was acquired by the Ottoman dynasty and its retention in Turkey thus assured forever; deliberately to create a risk of losing it is an action totally incompatible with reason, loyalty, and national feeling.”⁴⁶⁰

On the other hand, Necmeddin Sadik rejected the concerns of Lutfi Fikri Bey in *Aksam*. He pointed out that he shared the grief of Lutfi Fikri Bey about the resignation of the Caliph.

⁴⁵⁵ *Aksam*, 9 Nov. 1923, 1.

⁴⁵⁶ *Aksam*, 10 Nov. 1923, 1.

⁴⁵⁷ Zurcher, *Turkey*, 168.

⁴⁵⁸ Lutfi Fikri, “Huzur-u Hazret-i Hilafetpenahi’ye Acik Ariza” [An Open Petition to the His Excellency of Caliph], *Tanin*, 10 Nov. 1923, 1.

⁴⁵⁹ Huseyin Cahid, “Simdi de Hilafet Meselesi” [The Caliphate Question Presently], *Tanin*, 11 Nov. 1923, 1.

⁴⁶⁰ Lewis, *The Emergence*, 257.

Necmeddin Sadik suggested that the possible harmfulness of the Caliphate in the future should be considered as well. He was not sure about the attitude of the Lutfi Fikri Bey towards national sovereignty. According to Necmeddin Sadik Bey, Lutfi Fikri Bey was concerned about the protection of the dynasty but it was not clear how he valued national sovereignty.⁴⁶¹

The debate over the Caliphate was seen as untimely by many Turkish journalists. In *Vakit*, Mehmed Asim Bey thought that the subject was untimely and unnecessary.⁴⁶² Velid Ebuzziya Bey believed that a mistake caused another mistake in this issue. He criticized the pro-Kemalist newspaper *Aksam* as stirring up this issue unnecessarily. Velid Bey, as the editor of the conservative newspaper *Tevhid-i Efkar*, thought that making troubles untimely and unnecessarily was the attitude of the Ankara press, but this time it was generated by one of the Istanbul newspapers.⁴⁶³

While the resignation of the Caliph was discussed, the physical location of the Office of Caliphate became another topic in these discussions. According to the newspaper *Vatan*, there were three views in Ankara over the future of the Caliphate. According to one of these tendencies, the Caliphate would be expelled from Turkey. The second would transfer the Caliphate to Konya, close to Ankara. The third would keep the Caliphate in Istanbul.⁴⁶⁴ *Tevhid-i Efkar* objected to the possible relocation of the Caliphate. The newspaper interpreted this as stirring up troubles.⁴⁶⁵ While *Tevhid-i Efkar* interpreted this as malice, Mehmed Asim Bey believed relocation would be

⁴⁶¹ Necmeddin Sadik, "Hilafet Muessesesi Hakkında" [About the Institution of Caliphate], *Aksam*, 11 Nov. 1923, 1.

⁴⁶² Mehmed Asim, "Hilafet Bahsi" [The Caliphate Issue], *Vakit*, 10 Nov. 1923, 1.

⁴⁶³ Velid Ebuzziya, "Hilafet Meselesi" [The Caliphate Question], *Tevhid-i Efkar*, 13 Nov. 1923, 1.

⁴⁶⁴ *Vatan*, 14 Nov. 1923, 1.

⁴⁶⁵ *Tevhid-i Efkar*, 15 Nov. 1923, 1.

better for the state. According to him, if the Caliphate was transferred from Istanbul to an Anatolian city, it would be protected from all hazards.⁴⁶⁶

2.4.5 Letter Crisis and the Kemalist Reaction

While rumors about the resignation of the last Caliph were circulating in the Kemalist press, the question of the Caliphate aroused interest far beyond Turkey. These rumors brought anxious inquiries, especially from India, about the intentions of the republican regime. In these days, a “letter crisis” arose. Two Indian Muslim leaders, the Agha Khan and Ameer Ali, wrote a letter and sent it to Ismet Pasha, the Prime Minister of Turkey, on November 24, 1923. Lewis summarizes the core of the letter as: “The two signatories pointed out that the separation of the Caliphate from the Sultanate had increased its significance for the Muslims in general, and begged the Turkish government to place the Caliphate on a basis which would command the confidence and esteem of the Muslim nations, and thus impart to the Turkish state unique strength and dignity.”⁴⁶⁷ Moreover these Muslim Indian leaders asked that the caliphate be placed on a basis that would command the esteem of Muslims everywhere and called upon the Turkish people to preserve the Caliphate.⁴⁶⁸ They proclaimed themselves true friends and supporters of Turkey. They expressed sadness over the exclusion of the Caliph from political life in Turkey. Moreover, current uncertainty of the Caliphate was another concern for the Indian Muslim leaders.⁴⁶⁹

⁴⁶⁶ Mehmed Asim, “Makarri Hilafet” [The Center of Caliphate], *Vakit*, 15 Nov. 1923, 1.

⁴⁶⁷ Lewis, *The Emergence*, 257-258.

⁴⁶⁸ Davison, *The Modern Nations*, 129. Price, *A History of Turkey*, 128.

⁴⁶⁹ Tuncay, *Turkiye Cumhuriyeti 'nde*, 80-81.

This letter was published by three major Istanbul daily papers on December 5, 1923, before it reached Prime Minister Ismet Pasha.⁴⁷⁰ While Zurcher explains this as “because of the difficulty of communications with Ankara, the letter was published in Istanbul before it had been delivered to Prime Minister,”⁴⁷¹ Orga asserts that “by this attitude the Indians ignored the Ankara Government.”⁴⁷² This letter irritated Kemalist leaders and increased their doubts about the Caliphate. The Indian leaders were condemned as tools of the British Government, since they were British subjects and believed to possess some influence in British and Indian official circles. This was enough to lead the Ankara Government to suspect some deep British intrigue behind the letter. Beyond that the Indian leaders were demonized as agents of the British Government.⁴⁷³ Mustafa Kemal pointed out that there was danger to their sovereignty; the Aga Khan was an agent of the English; the Caliph in Istanbul was weak and susceptible, so it would be very easy for an agent to use him as an instrument to defeat the Nationalists. Later the Aga Khan became the sinister symbol the British would use to split Turkey: the Caliphate on one side and the Nationalists on the other. On the other hand, the Indian Muslim leaders rejected these accusations.⁴⁷⁴

This crisis was discussed in a secret session in the Grand National Assembly on December 8, 1923. Ismet Pasa described these attempts as “foreign propaganda” against the interests of Turkey. He also accused the Indian Muslim leaders, who sent this letter to Ankara, as “intimates of the British Government and Court” and “loyal British citizens”,⁴⁷⁵ thus implying this attempt

⁴⁷⁰ Barber, *The Sultans*, 277. Davison, *The Modern Nations*, 129. Kinross, *Ataturk*, 438. Tuncay, *Turkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde*, 80-81.

⁴⁷¹ Zurcher, *Turkey*, 167.

⁴⁷² Orga, *Phoenix Ascendant*, 145.

⁴⁷³ Chirol, *The Turkish Empire*, 461. Barber, *The Sultans*, 277.

⁴⁷⁴ Orga, *Phoenix Ascendant*, 146. Tuncay, *Turkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde*, 80-81.

⁴⁷⁵ *TBMM ZC secret session*, 8 Dec. 1923, v.4, 315.

was a British project. Rauf Bey likewise condemned this attempt and wanted to punish those people who were in favor.⁴⁷⁶

The letter of the Indian Muslim leaders was discussed widely in the Turkish press. In pro-Kemalist *Aksam*, Necmeddin Sadik Bey wrote an important article which criticized the Caliphate harshly. He suggested that the tie and the solidarity of all Muslims under the banner of the Caliphate was a dream. The importance of the Caliphate had decreased in the last centuries. In India and Egypt people were fighting against the British occupation in line with their national sentiments. The Caliphate was useless during the First World War, when the Caliph declared jihad against the infidels. Therefore, Turks would not sacrifice themselves anymore for the sake of the spiritual pleasures of the Muslim world. Turkey was a republic and separated religion from the state. If the Indian Muslim leaders wanted to see the Caliph as a political leader, it would not be accepted. If they showed their loyalty to the Caliph as a religious leader, it could be accepted.⁴⁷⁷ The newspaper *Vatan* interpreted the letter as an insincere effort by Aga Khan and Emir Ali. According to *Vatan*, these two leaders of India had previously accepted the separation of the Caliphate from the politics, but now they objected to this decision. This was a kind of discrepancy.⁴⁷⁸ However, the same discrepancy was apparent in the attitudes of the Kemalist movement. Kemalists treated the Caliphate respectfully at the beginning, but their attitude changed later. Moreover, during the discussions about the abolition of the Sultanate they proclaimed their respect to the Caliphate and its importance among the Muslim world. However, they changed their mind after this letter crisis occurred.

⁴⁷⁶ TBMM ZC secret session, 8 Dec. 1923, v.4, 320.

⁴⁷⁷ Necmeddin Sadik, "Makam-i Hilafet ve Alem-i Islam" [The Office of Caliphate and the Islamic World], *Aksam*, 6 Dec. 1923, 1.

⁴⁷⁸ *Vatan*, 10 Dec. 1923, 1.

The letter of the Indian Muslim leaders angered the Kemalist deputies and resulted as sending the “İstiklal Mahkemesi” (The Independence Tribunal) to Istanbul. The Grand National Assembly appointed four of its members to this extraordinary tribunal for the trial at Istanbul.⁴⁷⁹ The editors of the opposition newspapers, *İkdam*, *Tanin*, and *Tevhid-i Efkar*, were arrested and faced trial because of publishing this letter.⁴⁸⁰ The Independence Tribunal started to investigate the supposed treason of these editors and that of Lutfi Fikri Bey, who published an open letter to the Caliph, urging him not to resign. Finally, the newspaper editors were acquitted because this publication could not be construed into an offence against the law. However, Lutfi Fikri Bey was sent to jail for five years because of his letter.⁴⁸¹

Mehmed Asim Bey explained the fear of Indian Muslim leaders’ letter among Kemalists as fear of encountering a plot organized by a network in Istanbul against the Republic. He thought publishing that letter was unnecessary. Moreover, he interpreted the action of the Indian Muslim leaders as interfering in the internal politics of Turkey.⁴⁸² The Kemalist response to this so called plot was sending the most prominent journalists of Turkey to court. The *Journal de Genève* also discussed this trial. It saw this trial as a kind of Kemalist pressure against the freedom of speech.⁴⁸³ The most important journalists faced court because of publishing a letter which was exaggerated by Kemalist regime.

⁴⁷⁹ Chirol, *The Turkish Empire*, 461.

⁴⁸⁰ *Tevhid-i Efkar*, 12 Dec. 1923, 1.

⁴⁸¹ Zürcher, *Turkey*, 167-168. Chirol, *The Turkish Empire*, 461.

⁴⁸² Mehmed Asim, “Aga Han’ın Mektubunun Tesiri” [The Effect of the Agha Khan’s Letter], *Vakit*, 12 Dec. 1923, 1.

⁴⁸³ *Journal de Genève*, 11 Dec. 1923, 3.

The letter issue was commented by the foreign press also. The *Journal de Genève* reported another letter of Indian Muslims to the Swiss Government which was unknown in Turkish public opinion. In this letter, Abdel Kadir, one of the Indian Muslim leaders, showed his respect and loyalty to the Caliph Abdulmecid and the Ottoman dynasty. He declared his concerns over the anti-Caliphate movements in Ankara, and declared Indian Muslims would protest against the Turkish Government if it took a decision against the Caliphate.⁴⁸⁴ *The New York Times* interpreted the letter of Aga Khan as a cause of turmoil in Turkey.⁴⁸⁵ *Corriere della Sera* also discussed this initiative of the Indian Muslim notables, interpreting it as creating confusion in the nationalist government in Ankara. The newspaper also talked about the British effort at establishing an Arab Caliphate led by Sharif Hussein in Jerusalem. This possibility disturbed the Indian Muslims also.⁴⁸⁶

2.4.6 Kemalist Objections to Attitudes of Caliph Abdulmecid: The Budget Crisis and the First Kemalist Attack to the Caliphate

After the establishment of the Republic in October 1923, the struggle between Ankara and Istanbul intensified over the Caliphate. Abdulmecid, the Caliph, “by all accounts a mild and scholarly man,” was seen the only possible counterweight to Mustafa Kemal’s dominance of the political scene by the opponents of the Kemalist regime.⁴⁸⁷ The Kemalist objection to the personality of the Caliph increased over the Caliph’s royal pretensions. Irfan Orga gives details about the behaviors of Abdulmecid as:

He had for a long time been displaying himself with the great ostentation befitting a member of the royal blood. He received distinguished foreign personages and held levees. Every Friday he went to a different mosque in Istanbul, the people

⁴⁸⁴ *Journal de Genève*, 1 Dec. 1923, 2.

⁴⁸⁵ *The New York Times*, 6 Jan. 1924, 7.

⁴⁸⁶ *Corriere della Sera*, 6 Jan. 1924, 2.

⁴⁸⁷ Lewis, *The Emergence*, 258. Zürcher, *Turkey*, 167.

gathering in the streets to cheer him, his magnificent Arab horses tossing their manes and lifting their delicate feet with the precision of the thoroughbred. He flouted Mustafa Kemal's authority quietly and determinedly. He gave constant reminders to the populace of the past splendors of the Ottomans, one week wearing the headgear of Fatih Mehmet, another week carrying the sword of Sultan Selim III. This behavior was a joy to the people of Istanbul but a headache for Mustafa Kemal.⁴⁸⁸

While he was not a Sultan, Caliph Abdulmecid enjoyed these colorful ceremonies causing great concern among the Kemalist cadres at Ankara. Mustafa Kemal decided to seize the opportunity. He prepared the ground by reaching an agreement with some of his chief supporters, and by persuading influential newspaper editors to campaign against the Caliphate.⁴⁸⁹ Finally he determined to break openly. In the military maneuvers in Izmir at the beginning of 1924, Mustafa Kemal decided to destroy the Caliphate as a potential rival. He stayed two months there with his close friends, Ismet Pasha, the Prime Minister, Kazim Pasha, the Minister of War, and Fevzi Pasha, the Chief of the General Staff. In their meeting in Izmir, Mustafa Kemal noted that "we were agreed on the need to abolish the Caliphate. At the same time we decided to suppress the Ministry of Sharia and Evkaf and to unify public education."⁴⁹⁰

Aware of the threats posed by the caliphate to the Republican regime and to his personal prestige and power, Mustafa Kemal decided to abolish that institution at the end of January 1924.⁴⁹¹ For realizing this goal, he waited on the right moment. When the Caliph Abdulmecid wanted an augmentation of the Caliphate's budget on January 22, 1924, Mustafa Kemal refused it. Beyond the augmentation of his stipend, Abdulmecid wanted to contact governmental committees when they visited Istanbul.⁴⁹² These demands annoyed Mustafa Kemal and his allies.

⁴⁸⁸ Orga, *Phoenix Ascendant*, 144.

⁴⁸⁹ Barber, *The Sultans*, 276. Allen, *The Turkish Transformation*, 57. Davison, *The Modern Nations*, 129.

⁴⁹⁰ Atatürk, *Nutuk*, 848. Lewis, *The Emergence*, 258.

⁴⁹¹ Tamkoc, *The Warrior Diplomats*, 92.

⁴⁹² Barber, *The Sultans*, 276. Inonu, *Ismet Inonu'nun Hatiralari*, 47.

He felt that he had a chance to dismiss the Caliphate after these demands. Mustafa Kemal sent a telegram to Ismet Pasa at the same day. In his telegram, Mustafa Kemal expressed his hostility “the Caliph and the entire World has to know that there is neither religious nor political reason for the presence of the current protected Caliph and Caliphate in reality. The Turkish Republic will not expose its existence and independence to dangers because of these absurdities. The Caliphate is not more than a historical remembrance for us eventually. The demand of getting into contact with the statesmen of the Republic and the official committees with him is an offense to the independence of republic. It is enough for the Caliph to live on a smaller annuity rather than the President. The purpose should be living humanely, not in pomposity and splendor.”⁴⁹³ Mustafa Kemal immediately banned all Abdulmecid’s colorful processions. His stipend was cut by nearly fifty percent. A new law provided for the death penalty for sympathizers who hoped to see the Sultanate restored. In February 1924, Mustafa Kemal talked with the leading editors of the Istanbul newspapers, but these meetings could not heal the rift between Ankara and Istanbul.⁴⁹⁴ He decided to destroy the Caliphate over the budget issue in the Grand National Assembly at the end of February 1924.

At the end of the February 1924, the death knell was pealed for the Caliphate. In the session of February 27, 1924, the deputies criticized the Caliphate openly. Vasif Bey, pro-Kemalist deputy of Saruhan, was the foremost deputy to attack it. In his speech, Vasif Bey summarized the achievements of Kemalists. He described the treason of the former Sultan and how they demolished the Sultanate. Vasif Bey pointed out that they did not deem necessary to abolish the institution – the Sultanate- which could be a threat for the Republic. He warned the deputies that

⁴⁹³ Ataturk, *Nutuk*, 846-847. Orga, *Phoenix Ascendant*, 146.

⁴⁹⁴ Barber, *The Sultans*, 277. Orga, *Phoenix Ascendant*, 146. Zurcher, *Turkey*, 168.

the overthrown Sultanate was still a threat to the regime. Vasif Bey believed that the Sultanate was trying to continue under the guise of Caliphate. He criticized the pompous ceremonies of the Caliph. The annuity of the Caliph was paid for by poor people and this represented a problem. Vasif Bey terminated his speech by declaring “in the budget of the Turkish republic, there is no annuity for the Caliphate.”⁴⁹⁵ After Vasif Bey’s speech, Mehmed Emin Bey talked about the Caliph and Caliphate. He declared that there was no need for a successor of the Prophet in Turkey. He continued that Islam did not require a successor to the Prophet like the Holy See in Christianity.⁴⁹⁶

This historical session in the Assembly on February 27, 1924, was interpreted as one of turning points of the state by the Turkish press. The conservative *Tevhid-i Efkar* summarized this session as: “Vasif Bey requested the exclusion of the Ottoman Dynasty from Turkey.” The newspaper held out hope about continuing the Caliphate by a new person or by the Grand National Assembly. *Tevhid-i Efkar* underlined that the Ottoman Dynasty would not keep the Caliphate anymore in its hands.⁴⁹⁷ The newspaper *Vatan* also described this event as a historical one, seeing the Caliphate as a threat to the Republic and its abolition would be better for the state.⁴⁹⁸ *Aksam* was in favor of the approach proposed by Vasif Bey. It reported the demands of Vasif Bey were applauded by members of the National Assembly.⁴⁹⁹ The newspaper *Vakit* interpreted this situation as the last steps to removing irregularities in the state organization. *Vakit* also underlined the silence of the opposition over this subject. The newspaper interpreted this silence as unanimity in

⁴⁹⁵ TBMM ZC, 27 Feb. 1924, v.6, 413-415.

⁴⁹⁶ TBMM ZC, 27 Feb. 1924, v.6, 431.

⁴⁹⁷ *Tevhid-i Efkar*, 28 Feb. 1924, 1.

⁴⁹⁸ *Vatan*, 28 Feb. 1924, 1.

⁴⁹⁹ *Aksam*, 28 Feb. 1924, 1.

the People's Party in this subject.⁵⁰⁰ *Tevhid-i Efkar* denominated the majority in the People's Party as the radical faction which aimed to destroy the Caliphate completely. Mustafa Kemal was also in favor of this radical faction. The resolution of this faction would be accepted by the Assembly in a few days.⁵⁰¹

Before their fate was approved by the Grand National Assembly, the members of the Ottoman Dynasty gathered in the Dolmabahce Palace to make their future plans if the Caliphate were abolished and the Dynasty would have to leave the country.⁵⁰² The expulsion of the Dynasty was accepted in the group meeting of the Republican People's Party.⁵⁰³ The members of the Dynasty would leave the state with only their personal possessions, and the government would give them travel subsistence.⁵⁰⁴

The foreign press observed these turbulent days closely. *The New York Times* announced that the radical reforms were waiting in Turkey in these days. The newspaper especially stressed the importance of the opening speech of the Assembly, to be made by Mustafa Kemal on March 1, 1924.⁵⁰⁵ *Journal de Genève* described this period as a radical transformation. The radical steps taken by the Ankara Government would cause many troubles in the Muslim world.⁵⁰⁶ The *Journal de Genève* also reported that the conservatives did not join the debates within the People's Party.⁵⁰⁷ *Le Temps* interpreted the situation in Turkey as a struggle between radicals and conservatives in

⁵⁰⁰ *Vakit*, 28 Feb. 1924, 1.

⁵⁰¹ *Tevhid-i Efkar*, 29 Feb. 1924, 1.

⁵⁰² *Vatan*, 29 Feb. 1924, 1.

⁵⁰³ *Vakit*, 3 Mar. 1924, 1. *Tevhid-i Efkar*, 3 Mar. 1924, 1.

⁵⁰⁴ *Aksam*, 1 Mar. 1924, 1. *Vakit*, 2 Mar. 1924, 1.

⁵⁰⁵ *The New York Times*, 28 Feb. 1924, 3.

⁵⁰⁶ *Journal de Genève*, 29 Feb. 1924, p.2

⁵⁰⁷ *Journal de Genève*, 1 Mar. 1924, p.3

the Turkish Assembly. The newspaper interpreted Mustafa Kemal's speech in the Assembly as "a farewell to the East."⁵⁰⁸

2.4.7 Abolition of the Caliphate

The new session of the Assembly was opened by Mustafa Kemal on March 1, 1924. In the opening speech Mustafa Kemal emphasized three main points: the safeguarding and stabilization of the Republic, the creation of a unified national system of education, and the need to cleanse and elevate the Islamic faith, by rescuing it from the position of a political instrument, to which it had been for centuries.⁵⁰⁹ He pointed out that politics were harmful to religion: "it has now become a plainly evident truth that it is necessary to liberate and to elevate the Islamic religion from its position of being a tool of politics, in the way that has been traditional for centuries."⁵¹⁰ Mustafa Kemal prepared a draft bill to abolish the Caliphate. On March 2, 1924, the proposals of Mustafa Kemal were discussed and accepted in a meeting of the People's Party group.⁵¹¹

The final institutional remnant of empire, the Caliphate, was abolished on March 3, 1924, after the bill of Sheikh Saffet Effendi, pro-Kemalist deputy of Urfa, and his 53 co-sponsors was discussed in the National Assembly.⁵¹² In the first article of the bill, the Caliph was dethroned and the Caliphate was abolished. The members of the Ottoman Dynasty had to leave the country within 10 days, and were barred from Turkish citizenship.⁵¹³ During these discussions the Kemalist majority controlled the Assembly and the objections of the opposition were not taken seriously.

⁵⁰⁸ *Le Temps*, 2 Mar. 1924, 2.

⁵⁰⁹ *TBMM ZC*, 1 Mar. 1924, v. 7, 3-5. Lewis, *The Emergence*, 258-259.

⁵¹⁰ *TBMM ZC*, 1 Mar. 1924, v. 7, 5. Kinross, *Ataturk*, 438.

⁵¹¹ Price, *A History of Turkey*, 128. Kinross, *Ataturk*, 439. Lewis, *The Emergence*, 259.

⁵¹² *Ataturk*, *Nutuk*, 849.

⁵¹³ *TBMM ZC*, 3 Mar. 1924, v. 7, 28-29. *BCA*, 6 Mar. 1924, Document no: 2.12.7.

Even though there was no significant opposition outside the party, opposition within the party was silenced too. Valentine Chirol describes this situation as: “the law was passed by an overwhelmingly majority in the GNA, after a long, and sometimes metaphysical, and sometimes rather violent debate, though only two deputies ventured actually to vote against it.”⁵¹⁴ While Chirol asserts that there were two votes against the law, this assertion is not accurate. When the Assembly voted for the articles of the law, totally thirteen, the deputies raised their hands if they accepted or rejected the articles. While Zeki Bey and Halid Bey were against to the first article on the abolition of the Caliphate the vote was announced as “it was accepted”. Some deputies shouted “it was accepted by unanimously.”⁵¹⁵

First Ekrem Bey, pro-Kemalist deputy of Rize, ascended to the pulpit in the National Assembly to support the abolition of the Caliphate. He blamed the Ottoman Dynasty for using people as servants. Even though the Sultanate had collapsed, the House of Osman was still living pompously under the guise of the Caliphate. Ekrem Bey was astonished by Turkish gullibility to assent to this life style of the Ottoman Dynasty. While the Anatolian people were fighting enemies, the dynasty was dancing with them. Ekrem Bey underlined that historians, who would write those days in the future, would be astonished why the dynasty was not expelled immediately after the abolition of the Sultanate.⁵¹⁶ Ekrem Bey asked the members of the Assembly “Why are those people – the members of the Ottoman Dynasty- clinging to the throne, for serving to the nation?” As an extreme Kemalist, Ekrem Bey responded his own question: “You can give many grand viziers as examples who served the nation, but you will have difficulties to show any Sultan who

⁵¹⁴ Chirol, *The Turkish Empire*, 462.

⁵¹⁵ *TBMM ZC*, 3 Mar. 1924, v.7, 65.

⁵¹⁶ *TBMM ZC*, 3 Mar. 1924, v.7, 29.

served the nation. The sole motive to be attached to the throne for those Sultans was their own interests and ambitions.” Beyond these comments, Ekrem Bey condemned the Sultans as the main cause of the backwardness of the Turkish nation. He found no inherent relationship between the Caliphate and the Ottoman Dynasty. According to Ekrem Bey, the past of this dynasty was full of blood and they did not deserve the Caliphate.⁵¹⁷

Ekrem Bey mentioned the political role of the Caliphate in his speech too. He believed that the Office of Caliphate was useless, because during World War I Indian Muslim soldiers did not halt their attacks against Turkish soldiers fighting under the banner of the Caliphate. Yahya Galip Bey, deputy of Kirsehir, supported Ekrem Bey in this issue. He emphasized that the office of Caliphate was responsible for the death of ten million Turkish soldiers in Yemen during World War I, suggesting Turks sacrificed their lives in distant lands for the sake of the Caliphate while exaggerating the number of casualties of Turkish troops.⁵¹⁸ However, neither Ekrem Bey nor Yahya Galip Bey raised the help of Indian Muslims to the Turkish War of Independence, seen as a sacred war by Indian Muslims. For example, when peace negotiations in Lausanne was standstill, Indian Muslims threatened the British Government if it started a war against Turkey. *The New York Times* recounted the decision of Indian Caliphate Committee:

The Caliphate Conference, at its concluding session here (Gaya, British India), decided in the event of Great Britain's participating again in a war against Turkey, to launch immediately a civil disobedience campaign. This would include the spreading of propaganda throughout the police force and the army, prevention of recruiting, refusal to subscribe to war loans, boycotting of foreign cloth, picketing of liquor shops and prevention of the export of grain. The conference also resolved to recruit a legion for service under the Angora Government.⁵¹⁹

⁵¹⁷ TBMM ZC, 3 Mar. 1924, v.7, 29- 30.

⁵¹⁸ TBMM ZC, 3 Mar. 1924, v.7, 30- 33.

⁵¹⁹ “Indian Caliphate Conference Votes to Raise a Legion for Kemal”, *the New York Times*, 3 Jan. 1923, 3.

After the speech of Ekrem Bey, Zeki Bey, deputy of Gumushane and sole member of the former Second Group (the opposition to the Kemalists autocracy in the first period of the Assembly) explained his thoughts in favor of the Caliphate. As a supporter of the Union of Islam, Zeki Bey thought that the abolition of the Caliphate would be harmful for the state. He could not understand the concerns of the Kemalists over the power of the Caliph. Zeki Bey declared that sovereignty belonged to the nation forever. Instead of expelling the Caliph, he could be seated instead in Etlik, district of Ankara. Zeki Bey implied that the Republic was converting to the personal autocracy at that time, but his voice was silenced by Kemalists' protests.⁵²⁰

Halid Bey, deputy of Kastamonu who joined later the opposition party in 1924, supported Zeki Bey. In his speech, Halid Bey mentioned about their shared attitudes during the War of Independence. During the war, they had preached the need to save the Caliph from British captivity in Istanbul. People were loyal to the Caliph, and the Assembly respected the people's religious sentiments. Halid Bey pointed out that the Muslims were brothers in Islam. He believed that other Muslim nations respected Turks for supporting the Caliphate with their struggles for centuries. Halid Bey rejected the Kemalist position on the uselessness of the Caliphate, as well as the Kemalist discourse of Arab treason and the collaboration of Muslim Indians with the British Empire against the Ottoman Empire. He strongly believed that those nations were under the captivity of the British Empire and they did not take decisions for themselves. He gave the western Turkey as an example. When the west was occupied by the Greeks, that region could not send any troops to the rest of Turkey because of their captivity. According to Halid Bey, the situation in Arabia and India had to be considered like western Anatolia.⁵²¹

⁵²⁰ *TBMM ZC*, 3 Mar. 1924, v.7, 31- 33.

⁵²¹ *TBMM ZC*, 3 Mar. 1924, v.7, 35-36.

Halid Bey's main objection to the abolition of the Caliphate was on political principle. As a man of principle, Halid Bey raised the People's Party nine principles declared only six months prior. In these principles, the party declared the Caliphate as an exalted Office. Halid Bey asked rightly that what changed within six months and the People's Party had abandoned its principles. As a last word, Halid Bey regarded the dethronement of the Caliphate as a handicap for the future politics of the country.⁵²²

These objections were silenced by the Kemalist majority in the Assembly. Izzet Ulvi Bey, pro Kemalist deputy of Karahisar-i Sahib, was astonished by the opposition to abolition of the Caliphate. According to him, the Caliphate had a potential to convert into a Sultanate in some day; there was in history no Caliphate without its own government. Izzet Ulvi Bey approved the expulsion of the Ottoman dynasty for the sake of the country. It would stop the bloodshed.⁵²³ Sadly, bloodshed became a reality as a result of Kurdish rebellion because of the abolition of Caliphate, destroying the religious ties between these two nations.⁵²⁴

Vasif Bey, deputy of Saruhan, pointed out that the abolition of the Caliphate was proof of the sincerity of the Assembly which established the Republic. Vasif Bey denied the ill effects of the abolition of the Caliphate in external politics. He rejected the notion of a Union of Islam raised by Zeki Bey. Vasif Bey condemned the Caliphate and the Union of Islam which were useless during the First World War. According to him, Turks were killed by fellow Muslims in campaigns in Iraq, Canakkale, and Palestine. Vasif Bey asserted that the main military manpower source for

⁵²² TBMM ZC, 3 Mar. 1924, v.7, 35-36.

⁵²³ TBMM ZC, 3 Mar. 1924, v.7, 33.

⁵²⁴ Lundgren, *The Unwelcome Neighbor*, 43.

the British Empire was the Muslim lands. The fatwa of the Caliph did not stop these Muslim armies against the Ottoman Empire.⁵²⁵

Vasif Bey rejected the objections of Halid Bey also. During the Independence War, Kemalist propaganda about saving the Caliphate was necessary at that time, but now, it was unnecessary. The absolute necessity of events and time compelled that decision. Vasif Bey stressed the treason of the Sultan at that time. Despite this treason, the Assembly did not dethrone him from the Sultanate because of the critical time in the war. The Sultan used the Caliphate and religion as a tool to oppose national forces. According to Vasif Bey, the Caliphate was more harmful than the Sultanate against the national movement. He believed that the abolition of the Caliphate would reinforce the Republic. Vasif Bey emphasized that the struggle of a few opponents in favor of the Caliphate would fail.⁵²⁶ Vasif Bey's speech demonstrates the changing policies of the Kemalists who showed their loyalty to the Caliph when they needed his power.

Seyit Bey, Minister of Justice, believed that the Caliphate was a secular issue rather than a religious one. He did not think that the abolition of Caliphate would be a problem in the Muslim World. Seyit Bey likewise raised the actions of Indian Muslims and Arab troops against the Ottomans during the First World War. He thought that the Caliphate and its fatwa had no effect among these Muslims.⁵²⁷ While Seyit Bey thought that the Caliphate issue would not be a problem abroad, the Caliphate problem in fact lasted until 1932 and the Turkish Government was hampered by these initiatives in the Muslim World. These issue will be discussed in the next section.

⁵²⁵ *TBMM ZC*, 3 Mar. 1924, v.7, 37-38.

⁵²⁶ *TBMM ZC*, 3 Mar. 1924, v.7, 39- 40.

⁵²⁷ *TBMM ZC*, 3 Mar. 1924, v.7, 40- 50.

Prime Minister Ismet Pasha spoke last. He totally denied the main motive of the war had been rescuing the Caliph or Caliphate. Beyond this, Ismet Pasha listed the negative effects of the Caliphate, such as organizing revolts and collaborating with enemies against national forces. He warned the Turkish people: “My friends, soldiers, military officers! Wise up! The entire world is our enemy. The Caliph is our enemy. The Caliph collaborated with those people who want to enslave you.”⁵²⁸ This speech was inconsistent with the realities at the early stage of the Turkish War of Independence. Even though Ismet Pasha rejected the motive of rescuing the Caliph, it is mentioned above, when the National Assembly gathered on April 23, 1920 in Ankara; the first matter was to rescue the Sultan and the Caliph from British captivity.

The Turkish press announced this historical event widely to its readers. *Vatan* and *Tevhid-i Efkar* underlined that the session was unruly because of the debates between the members of the Grand National Assembly.⁵²⁹ These newspapers emphasized objections of Zeki Bey and Halid Bey who protested by hitting the desks by the majority group in the Assembly.⁵³⁰ *Tevhid-i Efkar* described the conservative deputies in the People’s Party as anxious about this decision. According to the newspaper, six deputies in the Party would resign after the abolition of the Caliphate was accepted in the Grand National Assembly.⁵³¹

This event was interpreted as the “complete elimination of the Ottoman Empire” by the Kemalist press. Mehmed Asim specified this situation in his article in pro- Kemalist paper, *Vakit*. According to the author, the Republican Government decided to eliminate the institutions in

⁵²⁸ TBMM ZC, 3 Mar. 1924, v.7, 62-63.

⁵²⁹ *Vatan*, 4 Mar. 1924, 1. *Tevhid-i Efkar*, 4 Mar. 1924, 1. *Vakit*, 4 Mar. 1924, 1.

⁵³⁰ *Vatan*, 4 Mar. 1924, 1.

⁵³¹ *Tevhid-i Efkar*, 4 Mar. 1924, 1.

conflict with its own structure. This decision was an elimination of the Ottoman history, the main motive of which was removing obsolete institutions in the way of progress.⁵³²

The abolition of the Caliphate became an important topics in the foreign press. *Le Temps* considered this new situation as a revolution in the political, social, and religious structure of the Turkish state. The newspaper saw the bill accepted by the National Assembly as a result of the nationalist and secular ideology of Mustafa Kemal.⁵³³ *Le Temps* stated that prominent oppositionists, such as Rauf Bey and Refet Bey, raised no objection to this decision.⁵³⁴ *Journal de Genève* announced the historical event as “Farewell to East.”⁵³⁵ *Corriere della Sera* interpreted this decision as the separation of religion from politics in Turkey.⁵³⁶ In another article, the newspaper described the new nationalist character of Turkey, which started to abandon the Islamic character of the former Ottoman Empire.⁵³⁷

2.4.8 After the Abolition of the Caliphate

As mentioned above, three proposals of Mustafa Kemal were discussed and accepted in a meeting of the People’s Party group on March 2, 1924.⁵³⁸ The first proposal was the abolition of the Caliphate. When the abolition of the Caliphate was accepted by the Assembly on March 3, 1924, the Grand National Assembly removed the Ministry of Sharia from the Government on the same day. As a second Kemalist initiative, the Presidency of Religious Affairs was established in

⁵³² Mehmed Asim, “İmparatorlugun Tasfiyesi” [The Clearance of Empire], *Vakit*, 4 Mar. 1924, 1.

⁵³³ *Le Temps*, 5 Mar. 1924, 1.

⁵³⁴ *Le Temps*, 5 Mar. 1924, 2.

⁵³⁵ *Journal de Genève*, 4 Mar. 1924, 2.

⁵³⁶ *Corriere della Sera*, 4 Mar. 1924, 2.

⁵³⁷ *Corriere della Sera*, 5 Mar. 1924, 1.

⁵³⁸ Kinross, *Ataturk*, 439. Lewis, *The Emergence*, 259.

accord with the resolution of Huseyin Hulki Effendi, deputy of Siirt, and his 57 companions.⁵³⁹ This new religious institution would appoint preachers, chaplains, and imams and would control and organize religious practices.⁵⁴⁰ The bill was accepted by the Assembly by show of hands. There were no objections to this proposal.⁵⁴¹ By establishing this religious institution, the Government took strict control over religious affairs in the country. The third Kemalist initiative was the unification of education to be discussed in the fourth chapter.

After debate in the Grand National Assembly, the Assembly accepted the deposition of the Caliph, the abolition of the Caliphate, and the expulsion of all members of the Ottoman house from Turkish territory to prevent “any return to the Ottoman era” on March 3, 1924.⁵⁴² When the decision of the abolition of the Caliphate was taken by the Grand National Assembly, Abdulmecid Effendi, the last Caliph was in Istanbul. Orders were sent immediately to Istanbul to expel him from the country. The decision of the Assembly was relayed to him by Haydar Bey, the Governor of Istanbul, and Sadettin Bey, the Chief constable of Istanbul. The next day at 5 am, the last Caliph was forced to leave the country with his family.⁵⁴³ Abdulmecid Effendi and his family got on the train in the Catalca station, and departed to Switzerland.⁵⁴⁴ Bernard Lewis stresses the choice of Catalca station to prevent demonstrations as: “the unhappy Abdulmecid was packed into a car and

⁵³⁹ *TBMM ZC*, 3 Mar. 1924, v.7, 21-24.

⁵⁴⁰ *Babalik*, 5 Mar. 1924, 1.

⁵⁴¹ *TBMM ZC*, 3 Mar. 1924, v.7, 24.

⁵⁴² Hanioglu, *A Brief History*, 197. Lewis, *The Emergence*, 259. Davison, *The Modern Nations*, 129. Kinross, *Ataturk*, 439.

⁵⁴³ *Aksam*, 5 Mar. 1924, 1.

⁵⁴⁴ *Vakit*, 5 Mar. 1924, 1. *Tevhid-i Efkar*, 5 Mar. 1924, 1. *Vatan*, 5 Mar. 1924, 1. *Le Temps*, 6 Mar. 1924, 2. *Journal de Geneve*, 5 Mar. 1925, 8. *Corriere della Sera*, 5 Mar. 1924, 2. Barber, *The Sultans*, 277.

driven to a railway station to board the Orient Express- not the main Sirkeci station, where his departure might have provoked demonstrations, but a small one outside the city.”⁵⁴⁵

The foreign press reported protest demonstrations. According to the *Corriere della Sera*, a demonstration was organized in Trabzon malcontents who were against the decision of the Government.⁵⁴⁶ *Journal de Genève* agreed that the exile of the Last Caliph caused demonstrations in Trabzon.⁵⁴⁷ This news was not cited any Turkish newspaper at that time. However, Trabzon was a center of the opposition. Therefore, there was a possibility of this kind of demonstration.

While Kemalists condemned the last Caliph harshly, he accepted the decision of the Grand National Assembly calmly. Abdulmecid Effendi declared that he was always a respectful servant to his nation and he would be engage in scientific researches abroad.⁵⁴⁸ While the train was leaving the Turkish border, the Turkish journalists wanted to make a last interview with him. In his last interview, Abdulmecid Effendi underlined that he would always pray for the nation and would not be a tool for foreign ambitions. He also declared that he would be engaged in the fine arts in Switzerland.⁵⁴⁹

After the abolition of the Caliphate, Mustafa Kemal gathered the editors of Istanbul press in Ankara to explain his thoughts on this issue. He believed that the decision to abolish the Caliphate would be beneficial for the country and these benefits would be seen soon.⁵⁵⁰ The attitude of the Istanbul press was positive in general. Even the conservative newspaper *Tevhid-i*

⁵⁴⁵ Lewis, *The Emergence*, 259.

⁵⁴⁶ *Corriere della Sera*, 6 Mar. 1924, 2.

⁵⁴⁷ *Journal de Genève*, 7 Mar. 1924, p.1

⁵⁴⁸ *Tevhid-i Efkar*, 5 Mar. 1924, 1. *Vakit*, 5 Mar. 1924, 1.

⁵⁴⁹ *Tevhid-i Efkar*, 6 Mar. 1924, 1. *Vakit*, 6 Mar. 1924, 1.

⁵⁵⁰ Borak and Kocaturk, *Ataturk'un Soylev ve Demecleri*, 74.

Efkar accepted this change. It underlined that by this decision, obstacles in the way of progress were removed; therefore, the government should obtain the improvement of the people's welfare immediately.⁵⁵¹

Abolition of the Caliphate was announced with official notices, and was welcomed by some Turkish citizens.⁵⁵² They sent telegrams to the Grand National Assembly celebrating the decision. In one of these telegrams, Hasan Bey and Mustafa Ruhi Bey, school teachers in Keskin, described the Caliphate as a harmful institution which ate away of the social life of Turks.⁵⁵³ In another, Atif Bey, Governor of Kirsehir, was thankful to the members of the National Assembly who ended the Office of Caliphate, which had exploited the nation unmercifully for centuries.⁵⁵⁴ Fatin Bey, Governor of Kastamonu, and the notables of Kastamonu sent a telegram to the Fethi Bey, the President of the National Assembly, blaming the Ottoman dynasty as an obstacle in the way of the progress of the Turkish nation. The caliphate was a tool for the Ottoman dynasty to continue its despotism.⁵⁵⁵ From these telegrams it can be said that the officials, such as governors and school teachers, were eager to show their loyalty to the Kemalist regime. The attitude of the ordinary people was more reluctant. This reluctance caused problems to the regime in following months, particularly in the Sheikh Said Rebellion of February 1925.⁵⁵⁶

After the abolition of the Caliphate and the dethronement of the Caliph, the Kemalist regime ordered imams and preachers to give khutbas⁵⁵⁷ praying for the prosperity and security of

⁵⁵¹ "Son Inkilabdan Sonra" [After the Last Revolution], *Tevhid-i Efkar*, 6 Mar. 1924, 1.

⁵⁵² *BCA*, 6 Mar. 1924, Document no: 2.1.29.

⁵⁵³ *TBMM ZC*, 6 Mar. 1924, v.7, 136.

⁵⁵⁴ *TBMM ZC*, 6 Mar. 1924, v.7, 136-137.

⁵⁵⁵ *TBMM ZC*, 6 Mar. 1924, v.7, 137.

⁵⁵⁶ Lundgren, *The Unwelcome Neighbor*, 43.

⁵⁵⁷ Khutba is the Islamic sermon delivered before Friday prayers and after Eid prayers.

the Republic and nation.⁵⁵⁸ In the first Friday prayer, imams gave sermons for the good of the Republic.⁵⁵⁹

2.4.9 Efforts for the Revival of the Caliphate and Kemalist Turkey

The Kemalist regime considered the Caliphate Question would not be a serious problem abroad after its abolition. From discussions in the Assembly, the Kemalist deputies gave no credit to the Caliphate and described this institution as useless and unnecessary one. Besides, the Kemalist regime tried to convince the public that the Caliphate was useless during the World War I and it could not be important in future. However, documents in the national archives undermine Kemalist discourse on this subject. The Kemalist regime was aware of the power of Caliphate and watched the process. As an example, the Kemalist regime tried to translate foreign articles in newspapers⁵⁶⁰, books⁵⁶¹ and all published materials which were related to the Caliphate.

The demonstrations, against the decision of the Ankara Government show how Kemalists stirred Muslim opinion worldwide.⁵⁶² The Muslim world, especially Indian Muslims, was angry about the decision to destroy the Caliphate. While they were calling Mustafa Kemal “sword of Islam”, the last decision of the Turkish Assembly caused dissatisfaction in India.⁵⁶³ Valentine Chirol summarizes these objections as:

In some Muslim countries outside Turkey the action of Ankara has already produced much more public commotion. The news reached Delhi on the very day when the All-India Caliphate Committee was receiving a Turkish Mission ostensibly representing the Red Crescent. At this most inauspicious juncture came to the bombshell of the Caliph's deposition. Despairing telegrams were sent to

⁵⁵⁸ *BCA*, 6 Mar. 1924, Document no: 2.12.8. *BCA*, 7 Mar. 1924, Document no: 2.1.30. Kinross, *Ataturk*, 440.

⁵⁵⁹ *Vakit*, 8 Mar. 1924, 1.

⁵⁶⁰ *BCA*, 19 Mar. 1924, Folder: 24477, Document no: 202.381.17.

⁵⁶¹ *BCA*, 5 Oct. 1924, Folder: 24483M, Document no: 202.382.4.

⁵⁶² *The New York Times*, 9 Mar. 1924, 4.

⁵⁶³ Kinross, *Ataturk*, 440.

Ankara, begging Mustafa Kemal to reconsider his action, and urging that, at any rate before giving effect to it, consultation should take place between representative Mohammedans from all parts of the Islamic world. Ankara's reply was the abolition of the Caliphate was a matter of purely internal concern and that Turkey would brook no interference from outsiders whether Muslim or non-Muslim.⁵⁶⁴

This example is important to undermine the Kemalist assertion of the uselessness of the Caliphate. The Turkish assembly sent a mission to India to get financial aid from Indian Muslims by representing the Office of Caliphate. Indian Muslims showed their respect to the Caliph and responded to Turkish mission very well. Mustafa Kemal notified Indian Muslims that the authority of the Caliphate was vested in the Grand National Assembly to reduce their reactions.⁵⁶⁵ But, this did not stop protests abroad, not only in the Muslim World but in Western countries also. The protest in the Berlin University in Germany was one of the important demonstrations against the decision of the Turkish Assembly.⁵⁶⁶

Abolition of the Caliphate was backed by the foreign press and this satisfied the Turkish press at the beginning. The newspaper *Aksam* referred to the positive attitude of the French press which interpreted the abolition of the Caliphate as modernizing Turkey and establishing a new idea which welcomed Western progress in Turkey.⁵⁶⁷ However, British and French objections to this decision were criticized by Turkish journalists harshly. Necmeddin Sadik specified the Kemalist attitude to the abolition of the Caliphate as: "...a Turkish nation, without a Caliph and Sultan, frightened the Machiavellist politics of the Western powers. Turks proved that they left the adventures of the Union of Islam by abolishing the Caliphate. By this means, the danger of the political Islam was eliminated in the Central Asia and India forever. Turks proved that they had

⁵⁶⁴ Chirol, *The Turkish Empire*, 463.

⁵⁶⁵ *The New York Times*, 10 Mar. 1924, 1.

⁵⁶⁶ *Journal de Genève*, 15 Mar. 1924, 2.

⁵⁶⁷ *Aksam*, 9 Mar. 1924, 1.

no interests in the rest of the World except their own country. British should be content to this attitude of Turks.”⁵⁶⁸ Mehmed Asim Bey criticized the British attitude as the “hatred of Turk” in this subject.⁵⁶⁹

While the Kemalist press harshly criticized the attitude of the foreign press, the conservative newspaper *Tevhid-i Efkar* described this attitude as a normal one. According to the newspaper, the Kemalist press thought that the Caliphate Question was an internal issue. However, the attitude of French and British governments and news in the foreign press undermined this Kemalist assertion. *Tevhid-i Efkar* alluded to the deficiency of the Kemalist regime because of its failure to evaluate the external effects of the abolition of the Caliphate.⁵⁷⁰

In fact, the vacancy of the Caliphate gave a chance to foreign powers, such as Great Britain, France, and Italy, to exploit this issue politically. The British project of a new Arab Caliphate led by Sharif Hussein, the king of Hedjaz, was one of these initiatives. Following the abolition of the Ottoman Caliphate in March 1924, King Hussein made haste to declare his readiness to accept the office of Caliphate.⁵⁷¹ His followers acclaimed him as the new caliph on March 5, 1924, only two days after the Turkish decree. After this acclamation, they organized the Pilgrimage Congress in July 1924.⁵⁷² This project raised some concerns among the great powers, especially in France. The French Government was fearful of Great Britain’s potential advantage in influence over Arab Kingdoms by establishing an Arab Caliphate. However, when Hussein was toppled by the Saudis,

⁵⁶⁸ Necmeddin Sadik, “Haricdeki Tesirleri” [The Effects in Abroad], *Aksam*, 10 Mar. 1924, 1.

⁵⁶⁹ Mehmed Asim, “Ingiltere’den Bir Ses” [A Voice from England], *Vakit*, 10 Mar. 1924, 1.

⁵⁷⁰ “Aleyhimizdeki Dedikodulara Karsi” [Opposite to the Gossips against Us], *Tevhid-i Efkar*, 15 Mar. 1924, 1.

⁵⁷¹ Chirol, *The Turkish Empire*, 463. Allen, *The Turkish Transformation*, 61.

⁵⁷² Cemil Aydin, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia: Visions of World Order in Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian Thought*, (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2013), 139.

his claim ended also.⁵⁷³ Beyond the British attempt, the French government was also looked at creating a new Caliphate in North Africa, probably in Morocco, under the French mandate.⁵⁷⁴ On the other hand, the Italian Government invited the last Caliph to settle in Italy.⁵⁷⁵ While Kemalist orthodoxy claims that the importance of the Caliphate was miniscule, these initiatives deny this assertion. The Office of Caliphate was still regarded as an important institution.

After Sharif Hussein, the British Government used Fuad, King of Egypt, to establish the Caliphate in Egypt. Another “caliphate congress” was largely organized by Egyptian religious scholars, members of Al-Azhar, in May 1926 at Cairo. Those in attendance represented more of the Muslim world but were heavily weighted toward Egyptian and Palestinian delegates.⁵⁷⁶ Esposito describes the struggle of the Congress as: “The congress reasserted the traditional mainstream belief that the caliphate is legitimate and necessary. However, it acknowledged that a caliph with both spiritual and temporal authority was not possible, given the prevailing political situation; and so the issue remained unresolved.”⁵⁷⁷ While Fuad tried to have himself elected caliph, he failed due to negative reactions from Muslim leaders. In particular, the Indian Khilafat (Caliphate) movement even refused to send delegates, fearing that the Congress was designed to advance the Egyptian King’s claims. After these initiatives, another congress was held in

⁵⁷³ Martin S. Kramer, *Islam Assembled: The Advent of the Muslim Congresses*, (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1986), 80.

⁵⁷⁴ *Corriere della Sera*, 5 Mar. 1924, 2-3.

⁵⁷⁵ *Le Temps*, 9 Mar. 1924, 2.

⁵⁷⁶ Leon Carl Brown, *Religion and State: The Muslim Approach to Politics*, (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2000), 118. Aydin, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia*, 139. Paul Gentizon, “Lettre de Turquie”, *Le Temps*, 7 Mar. 1924, 2.

⁵⁷⁷ John L. Esposito, *Islam and Politics*, (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1998), 72.

Jerusalem in 1931, where the last Caliph, Abdülmecid, tried to gain recognition, but was unsuccessful due to political conflicts amongst the participants.⁵⁷⁸

In conclusion, after the separation of the Caliphate from the Sultanate in November 1922, the traditional power of religious ideology diminished but was not finished totally. The Kemalist regime was aware of the potential threat of the Caliphate to its ideological identity. While Mustafa Kemal felt that the Caliphate was useful during the negotiations in the Peace Conference in Lausanne, he broke his ties with this traditional power after the Peace Treaty was signed in July 1923, and Kemalists looked for an opportunity to destroy the Caliphate totally. The letter of the Indian Muslim leaders to the National Assembly was seen as a good opportunity to attack the Caliphate. Kemalists described the Caliphate as an issue justifying foreign intervention, and so wanted to abolish it as soon as possible. In March 1924, the abolition became a fact. With this decision, Kemalists broke all their ties with traditional Islamic institutions. The main Kemalist justification for this decision was the Caliphate became unnecessary, but this is not completely true. The Mosul Question between Turkey and the Great Britain was still on the table at that time and it is puzzling to not use the political power of the Caliphate against the British. Besides, the abolition of the Caliphate would destroy the traditional loyalty of Kurds to the Turkish state. Kemalists ignored the Kurdish disappointment with this decision cutting religious ties between these two nations. The consequence was the Sheikh Said Rebellion in the Kurdish region of Turkey in 1925 because of the Kemalist negligence of the concerns of Kurds.

2.5 Sheikh Said Rebellion of 1925 and the Elimination of First Opposition Party

The abolition of the Sultanate in November 1922, and the Caliphate in March 1924, shattered the traditional political structure in Turkey. The modernization and secularization of

⁵⁷⁸ Brown, *Religion and State*, 118. Ardic, *Islam and the Politics of Secularism*, 85.

Turkey worried conservatives about the future of society. The Sheikh Said Rebellion of 1925, the first real uprising against the Kemalist modernization and secularization, aimed to revive the Caliphate destroyed by Kemalists in March 1924.⁵⁷⁹ The rebellion was led by Sheikh Said, an influential and revered sheikh of the Nakshibendi dervish order among the Zaza tribes which mostly inhabited in the eastern provinces of Elazig, Genc, and Dersim.⁵⁸⁰

The motives and character of the rebellion have been interpreted in various ways by Turkish and foreign scholars. One of these approaches is the nationalist character of the rebellion. As an example, Robert Olson sees this rebellion as Kurdish nationalist. In his book, *“The Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism and the Sheikh Said Rebellion, 1880–1925”*, Olson explained this rebellion as: “The Sheikh Said Rebellion was the first large-scale nationalist rebellion by the Kurds. The role of the Azadi⁵⁸¹ was fundamental in its unfolding. Kurdish intellectuals and military officers lay at the heart of the nationalist movement, in terms of organization and recruitment. The paramount influence of the more secular or non-cleric Kurdish nationalist organizations must be separated from the rebellion itself and its ‘sheikhly’ leadership. The Sheikh Said rebellion was led largely by sheikhs, a deliberate determination by the leadership of Azadi from 1921 onward.”⁵⁸²

The second approach sees both religious and nationalist motives behind the Sheikh Said Rebellion. Erik Jan Zürcher emphasizes that while “the leadership was undoubtedly motivated by

⁵⁷⁹ Lundgren, *The Unwelcome Neighbor*, 43.

⁵⁸⁰ Howard, *History of Turkey*, 95. Celik, *Contemporary Turkish Foreign Policy*, 33. Lewis, *The Emergence*, 261. Lundgren, *The Unwelcome Neighbor*, 43. Kalaycioglu, *Turkish Dynamics*, 48.

⁵⁸¹ Azadi (Freedom) was one of the Kurdish organization which was formed in 1923 in Erzurum. The organization associated with the uprising by Sheikh Said in 1925. The main leaders of the organization were Cibranlı Halit Bey, Yusuf Ziya Bey, and Tegmen Rıza Bey.

⁵⁸² Robert Olson, *The Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism and the Sheikh Said Rebellion, 1880-1925*, (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1989), 91-95.

the desire for an autonomous or even independent Kurdistan, the rank and file acted from religious motives, demanding the restoration of the holy law and the caliphate.”⁵⁸³ Like Zurcher, Hans-Lukas Kieser also points out that the rebellion was motivated partly by religion and partly by Kurdish nationalism.⁵⁸⁴ Ersin Kalaycioglu indicates the importance of Kurdish intelligentsia behind the rebellion: “Islamic propaganda was a smokescreen to hide the true feelings of the Kurdish leaders, who would establish a Kurdish state, under the guise of a ‘Sharia State’ for the Kurds. Kurds had been a tribal people, whose identity was deeply influenced by Islam. The Kurdish intellectual nationalists assumed that the only way to mobilize the tribes was to rally them under the flag of Islam, for their ethnic identity did not seem to transcend beyond their tribal allegiances.”⁵⁸⁵

The third and most common approach is to emphasize the religious character of the rebellion. Kemalist scholars mostly explain this rebellion as a reactionary uprising which aimed to destroy the newly established republic. In particular Behçet Cemal and Metin Toker have reflected this Kemalist orthodoxy. Behcet Cemal depicts Sheikh Said as a great agitator. He indicated that Sheikh Said’s inflammatory speeches inspired villagers with hatred against the Republican government.⁵⁸⁶ Metin Toker also sees the cause of the rebellion as a reactionary mentality. He summarized that the mentality of Sheikh Said as: “the madrasahs have been closed down. The Ministry of Religion and Pious Foundations has been abolished. In the newspapers a horde of irreligious writers wantonly insult religion and besmirch the name of our Lord the

⁵⁸³ Zurcher, *Turkey*, 171.

⁵⁸⁴ Hans-Lukas Kieser, “An Ethno-Nationalist Revolutionary and Theorist of Kemalism: Dr Mahmut Esat Bozkurt (1892- 1943),” in *Turkey Beyond Nationalism*, ed. Hans-Lukas Kieser (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006), 24.

⁵⁸⁵ Kalaycioglu, *Turkish Dynamics*, 49.

⁵⁸⁶ Behcet Cemal, *Seyh Sait Isyani [The Sheikh Said Rebellion]*, (Istanbul: Sel Yayınları, 1955), 24.

Prophet. I shall this very day, if only I can, start struggling and become one of those who contribute to the saving of religion.”⁵⁸⁷ More recently Yasemin Celik also shares the same Kemalist point of view in this subject. Moreover, she gives credit to the opposition behind this rebellion. She asserted that “Sheikh Said’s goal was to establish a traditional Islamic order in Turkey, and he was supported not only by Kurds but also by groups dissatisfied with the secular direction the country was taking.”⁵⁸⁸

The religious character of the Sheikh Said rebellion was mostly accepted by foreign scholars also. Douglas Howard hold “the rebellion was expressed in a powerful religious idiom, calling for restoration of the caliphate and rule by the sharia.”⁵⁸⁹ The importance of religion and the caliphate for the Kurds was mentioned by Eleanor Bisbee also. She stresses that “they (Kurds) are Muslims, and when the new Turkish government went so far as to depose the head of their religion, the Caliph, and to promulgate secular Turkish laws, the Kurds rebelled.”⁵⁹⁰ Asa Lundgren indicates that the rebellion was framed as a “holy war” by the Kurdish rebels and they were demanding the restoration of the Caliphate.⁵⁹¹ Henry Elisha Allen depicts the revolt in the eastern provinces as “the danger and strength of reaction and ignorant fanaticism in the country.”⁵⁹² Philip Price also emphasizes that Kurds rebelled against the secular republic and for the restoration of the Sultan and the Islamic law.⁵⁹³

⁵⁸⁷ Metin Toker, *Seyh Said ve İsyanı [Sheikh Said and His Rebellion]*, (Ankara: Akis Yayınları, 1968), 21.

⁵⁸⁸ Celik, *Contemporary Turkish Foreign Policy*, 33.

⁵⁸⁹ Howard, *History of Turkey*, 95.

⁵⁹⁰ Bisbee, *The New Turks*, 54.

⁵⁹¹ Lundgren, *The Unwelcome Neighbor*, 43.

⁵⁹² Allen, *The Turkish Transformation*, 177.

⁵⁹³ Price, *A History of Turkey*, 132.

Following the formation of Ismet Pasha's Government on March 3, 1925, a drastic 'Law on the Maintenance of Order' was rushed through the Assembly, giving extraordinary and, in effect, dictatorial powers to the government for two years on March 4, 1925.⁵⁹⁴ This law, which remained in effect until 1929, provided the administrative basis for the government's authoritarian tendencies.⁵⁹⁵ The Sheikh Said Rebellion gave a great opportunity to Mustafa Kemal to ban the first opposition party in the Grand National Assembly. On the advice of the Independence Tribunal, the government closed down the Progressive Republican Party on June 5, 1925.⁵⁹⁶ According to the tribunal, members of the party had supported the rebellion and tried to exploit religion for political purposes.⁵⁹⁷

The Kemalist attitude changed frequently during the rebellion. While Kemalists initially blamed the rebellion as a reactionary uprising, their view shifted to a nationalist reaction which was backed by the British Government at the end. This section will trace these Kemalist changes. Moreover, it will discuss Yusuf Ziya Bey, deputy of Bitlis and member of the Second Group in the first period of the Grand National Assembly. He later was executed in April 1925 during the Sheikh Said Rebellion, accused of being one of the Azadi leaders who were responsible for this revolt. However, Yusuf Ziya Bey rejected nationalist aspirations many times in his speeches in the Assembly. The fraternity of the Turkish and the Kurdish nations under the banners of Islam was his key idea. His thoughts favored Islamic brotherhood more than Kurdish nationalism.

⁵⁹⁴ Lewis, *The Emergence*, 261. Howard, *History of Turkey*, 95. Ozoglu, *From Caliphate to Secular State*, 105.

⁵⁹⁵ Altunisik and Tur, *Turkey*, 17. Kalaycioglu, *Turkish Dynamics*, 50.

⁵⁹⁶ "Terakkiperver Merkez ve Subaati Sed Edildi" [The Center and Branches of Progressive Party were Abolished], *Cumhuriyet*, 6 Jun. 1925, 1. Zurcher points out this date as June 3, 1925. Zurcher, *Turkey*, 172. Like Zurcher, Lewis also gives this date as mistakenly June 3, *The Emergence*, 261.

⁵⁹⁷ Zurcher, *Turkey*, 172. Howard, *History of Turkey*, 96. Celik, *Contemporary Turkish Foreign Policy*, 33.

Freedom of press suffered a blow after the Law on the Maintenance of Order was accepted by the Assembly. The Kemalist regime's long term dissatisfaction with the Istanbul press was fulfilled after this law was effectuated. The ban on conservative and socialist publications left the Kemalist press as the only source of information. Therefore, the Sheikh Said Rebellion gave an opportunity to silence the press opposed to the Kemalist regime. This section will cover the implementations of Law on the Maintenance of Order as a tool to destroy the opposition on the way to Kemalist autocracy.

2.5.1 Kurdish People and Their Support to the Turkish War of Independence

The War of Independence united the Kurdish and Turkish people under the banner of Islam.⁵⁹⁸ The leaders of the resistance movement were aware of the importance of Islamic discourse in the war years. Mustafa Kemal tried to mobilize the religious legitimization at his disposal in order to create a broad alliance during the war years. Kurds accepted Mustafa Kemal's leadership only because he promised to protect and preserve the caliphate and form a new, religiously legitimized state.⁵⁹⁹

The majority of Kurds in the Ottoman Empire supported the resistance movement against the invasion of the Allied powers. There were Kurdish representatives, who collaborated with the other Muslim elements of the Empire, in the congresses of Erzurum in June 1919, and Sivas in

⁵⁹⁸ Kemal Kirisci, "The Kurdish Question and Turkish Foreign Policy", in *The Future of Turkish Foreign Policy*, ed. Lenore G. Martin and Dimitris Keridis, (Cambridge, MA: the MIT Press, 2004), 280.

⁵⁹⁹ Hamit Bozarslan, "Kemalism, Westernization, and Anti-Liberalism", in *Turkey Beyond Nationalism*, ed. Hans-Lukas Kieser (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006), 30.

November 1919, and even on the nationalists' representative committee.⁶⁰⁰ Denise Natali emphasized the Kurdish support to the resistance movement and their rejection of the separatist movement as: "...Kurds from Sivas, Diyarbakir, Harput, Van, and Bitlis refused separation from the Ottoman community. Kurdish chiefs in the Erzincan region protested against Serif Pasha, arguing that the Kurds were the 'legitimate brothers of the Turks' and demanding not to be separated from their compatriots. Sheikh Abdulkadir, a Kurdish notable and member of the Ottoman Council of State, criticized Kurds who demanded independence, claiming it was indignant to Kurdish honor. Like Bedirhan, Abdulkadir refused to support Serif Pasha's map of Kurdistan presented at the Paris Peace Conference."⁶⁰¹

The Treaty of Sevres, the treaty between the Ottoman Empire and Allies at the end of World War I, was signed on August 10, 1920. An independent Kurdistan was promised by this treaty. However, the Kurds supported the resistance movement, despite the efforts of British agents to influence them and despite the fact that they were granted autonomy under the Treaty of Sevres.⁶⁰² Kurdish tribal leaders sent telegrams to the Grand National Assembly to show their loyalty. In one telegram, Kurdish leaders underlined that "Kurds understood that small pieces could be swallowed easily. We reject the Kurds who want to separate themselves from the Turkish unity. The destiny of Kurds is the same as the destiny of Turks. We do not wait any other savior except the Ankara Government and we do not wish to beg mercy from the Allies. We will support

⁶⁰⁰ Howard, *History of Turkey*, 95. Zurcher, *Turkey*, 170. Kirisci, "The Kurdish Question and Turkish Foreign Policy," 280.

⁶⁰¹ Denise Natali, *The Kurds And the State: Evolving National Identity in Iraq, Turkey, And Iran*, (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2005), 77.

⁶⁰² Zurcher, *Turkey*, 170.

our Government until peace is achieved.”⁶⁰³ The Kurdish leaders of Van also sent another telegram to the Government declaring the only representative of the Kurdish people in the Peace Talks of London in 1921 as the Ankara Government.⁶⁰⁴

Not only British efforts to recruit Kurds were condemned by Kurds but Greek initiatives also. While Fevzi Pasha, the Chief of General Staff, was explaining the military situation after the Battle of Sakarya in August-September 1921, he mentioned a Greek initiative which aimed of independence for Kurds. Yusuf Ziya Bey, deputy of Bitlis, pointed that this kind of initiative went nowhere in Kurdish regions. He went to his polling district and talked with all Kurds there. He underlined that there were no subversive ideas in Kurdish region and he believed that those ideas would never be effective. He described ordinary Kurds’ thoughts about the Ankara Government as: “there was a fire far away and many Kurdish men were sitting around the fire. These men became more specific by giving an example. The Ankara Government is a fire, a light for the Islamic World. If it will be extinguished, the entire Islamic World would be extinguished.” Ilyas Sami Bey, deputy of Mus, also described ineffective propaganda which aimed to separate the Kurdish people from their Turkish countrymen.⁶⁰⁵

Yusuf Ziya Bey was one of the most important representatives of the unity of Kurdish and Turkish people in the Grand National Assembly. He summarized general feelings of people in the Kurdish land, stressing the religious identity of Kurdish people many times. When the Ankara Government wanted to send a committee to Kurdish territory, Yusuf Ziya Bey advised the government to choose mostly religious deputies who could touch the feelings of Kurds. If the

⁶⁰³ *TBMM ZC*, 17 Mar. 1921, v.9, 132.

⁶⁰⁴ *TBMM ZC*, 19 Mar. 1921, v.9, 140-141.

⁶⁰⁵ *TBMM ZC (secret session)*, 13 Dec. 1921, v.2, 477- 479.

government instead appointed military men, the local residents of Kurdistan would be disgusted. People in Kurdish lands did not like to see people in uniforms. According to Yusuf Ziya Bey, the religious leaders of the Assembly would be most effective if they were sent to the Kurdish region. This committee should counsel people in the mosques and preach to them. They had to talk with the religious scholars over the religious issues and remove false ideas among the people.⁶⁰⁶

After the Turkish victory over the Greeks, the peace talks between the Ankara Government and the Allies began in Lausanne, Switzerland. The Kurdish Question was at the table again in this Conference. Kurdish deputies in the Assembly showed their support once more for the Ankara Government. Diyar Aga, deputy of Dersim, pointed that there were neither Kurdish nor Turkish factions in the Assembly. He said that there was a unity between deputies but the enemies wanted disunite this fraternity. Suleyman Necati Bey, deputy of Erzurum, underlined the kinship of these two nations. He described the unity of Kurds and Turks as the result of a mixture which lasted many centuries. He believed that neither Turks nor Kurds could live separated from each other.⁶⁰⁷

Yusuf Ziya Bey declared the most powerful words on this subject. He warned the representatives of Ankara Government in Lausanne about the Mosul Question. He said that the separation of Mosul from eastern Turkey would be the death of Kurdish lands. Moreover, he underlined the brotherhood of Turks and Kurds: “Europeans say that the major minority in Turkey is Kurds. I am a son of a Kurdish man. Therefore, I want to assure you as a Kurdish deputy, Kurds do not want anything except the prosperity and success of their elder brothers, Turks. We – Kurds-tread all rights given by Europeans in the Treaty of Sevres under our feet. We fought in the Mesopotamia campaigns with Turks together. We sacrificed our blood with Turks, and we did not

⁶⁰⁶ *TBMM ZC*, 13 Mar. 1922, v.18, 191-192.

⁶⁰⁷ *TBMM ZC*, 3 Nov. 1922, v.24, 347- 350.

want to separate ourselves from our Turkish brothers. We did not want to separate from them and we will not.” Yusuf Ziya Bey added the importance of Kirkuk and Mosul for Kurds and warned the delegation in Lausanne to save that most important Kurdish region.⁶⁰⁸

The Mosul Question was the core of the discussions in the Grand National Assembly. Unity between Kurds and Turks was evident during these discussions. Rauf Bey, the PM of the Ankara Government, explained the situation in the peace talks as “the majority of Mosul was Kurdish and Turkish people who united under the same religion, wish and feeling.”⁶⁰⁹ Sirri Bey, deputy of Izmit, referred to Lord Curzon’s statement which underlined that the majority of Mosul was Kurdish. Sirri Bey emphasized the unity of Kurdish and Turkish people in Turkey. Therefore, Mosul should be left to Turkey because of its majority. If Mosul was dominantly Arab land, then it could be discussed. However, it was a dominantly Kurdish land and should be a part of Turkey.⁶¹⁰ Yusuf Ziya Bey expressed his loyalty to his Turkish countrymen once more. In his speech, he brought up Lord Curzon’s statement and said that if Mosul was a Kurdish land, the majority of Kurds lived in Turkey; therefore the separation of Kurdish Mosul from its majority in Turkey was a contradiction for the Allies. If the rights of minorities were accepted by Allies, they had to leave Mosul to Turkey. Moreover, Yusuf Ziya Bey described the representatives of the Ankara Government as not representing only Turkish people but also Kurdish people. Therefore, this committee was a Kurdish committee in Lausanne. The attitude of British statesmen about not leaving Mosul to Turkey because of its Kurdish majority was a contradiction according to Yusuf Ziya Bey. Kurds and Turks were united and Mosul should follow this unity.⁶¹¹

⁶⁰⁸ *TBMM ZC*, 3 Nov. 1922, v.24, 353.

⁶⁰⁹ *TBMM ZC*, 3 Jan. 1923, v. 26, 147.

⁶¹⁰ *TBMM ZC*, 3 Jan. 1923, v. 26, 157.

⁶¹¹ *TBMM ZC*, 3 Jan. 1923, v. 26, 166.

British projects for the future of Kurdistan were rejected by Kurdish deputies in the Assembly. Yusuf Ziya Bey in particular criticized Lord Curzon for these schemes. As the head of the British delegation Lord Curzon asserted that the Kurdish deputies were appointed by Mustafa Kemal. Moreover, he dismissed the Kurdish deputies as ignorant and ineligible to represent Kurds. Yusuf Ziya Bey rejected all of these ideas. He declared that if ignorance was rejection of British policies and poisonous activities, he accepted ignorance. Moreover, he stressed legal elections in Turkey. Yusuf Ziya Bey underlined that there was not any single myrmidon of Mustafa Kemal in the Assembly, but instead all deputies were elected by the people. When the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in World War I became a fact and the rights of every nation were supported by the declaration of Wilson, the Kurdish people decided to collaborate with their Turkish brothers and went to the polls to elect their deputies to the Assembly. According to Yusuf Ziya Bey, Kurds had a single idea: to unite the destiny of Kurds with Turks. If Lord Curzon had tried to separate Kurdish people 15 years ago, it might have had some effect. However, the Kurdish people and intellectuals would not be entrapped by the British after they saw the fate of Albania, Iraq, Syria, and Ireland. Yusuf Ziya Bey shouted in the Assembly that they would get Mosul from the British as soon as possible. If the British Government did not leave Mosul to Turkey, Yusuf Ziya Bey described them as sinking bloody wells near the petroleum wells. According to him, Kurds would expel the British from Mosul.⁶¹²

Yusuf Ziya Bey showed his dissatisfaction with nationalism, declaring: “I am not nationalist. Islam banned nationalism. I am only Muslim and nothing else. I always live in an Islamic way and my opinions are suitable to Islam. I do not accept nationalism.”⁶¹³ He showed his

⁶¹² *TBMM ZC*, 25 Jan. 1923, v. 26, 505-506.

⁶¹³ *TBMM ZC*, 13 Mar. 1922, v.18, 192.

respect to his Turkish countrymen and he rejected the allegations of Kurdish nationalists. In another speech when the Mosul Question was discussed in the Assembly, Yusuf Ziya Bey stressed once more the importance of Mosul and then he uttered his sincere words about Turks and Turkey: “My friends, I am a Kurd who desires the rise, the honor, and the progress of Turkey sincerely. The reason for that was my language which gave honor to me to be literate. This language is Turkish not my ethnic language Kurdish. Because of this I want the rise and glory of Turks.”⁶¹⁴

2.5.2 Kemalist Policies towards to the Kurdish People after the War of Independence

After the Turkish War of Independence, the Kemalist attitude changed towards Kurds in Turkey. First of all, Kemalists started to break their political promises to the Kurdish people. They had not accorded to Sunni Kurds the autonomy for regions in southeast Turkey where large Kurdish populations lived. However, this autonomy had been promised by Kemalists to Kurds for their collaboration during the War of Independence.⁶¹⁵ Zurcher described this attitude as: “Within the new borders of the republic about 20 percent of the population was Kurdish, but they were not mentioned in the Peace Treaty of Lausanne and promises of autonomy made by the nationalist leaders, including Mustafa Kemal himself, during the independence struggle, were forgotten. This was a great disappointment to the Kurdish nationalists.”⁶¹⁶

While the denial of the political autonomy of the Kurdish region raised dissatisfaction among the Kurds, relations between Kurds and the predominantly Turkish republican government

⁶¹⁴ TBMM ZC (*secret session*), 6 Mar. 1923, v. 4, 163.

⁶¹⁵ Kieser, “An Ethno-Nationalist Revolutionary and Theorist of Kemalism: Dr Mahmut Esat Bozkurt (1892-1943),” 24. Howard, *History of Turkey*, 95.

⁶¹⁶ Zurcher, *Turkey*, 170.

deteriorated in 1924. The abolition of the caliphate removed an important religious symbol that bound the two communities together. This event drove a wedge between the Turkish nationalists and the mostly conservative Sunni Muslim Kurds.⁶¹⁷

Beyond the political and religious concerns, the cultural denial of the Kurdish people caused resentment as well.⁶¹⁸ The nationalist regime started to construct a new national consciousness and developed a repressive policy towards Kurdish identity: the public use of Kurdish and the teaching of Kurdish were prohibited. Laws passed by parliament in 1924 forbidding publications in Kurdish made the chasm between the Turkish nationalists and Kurdish people even wider.⁶¹⁹ Moreover, Kurds were defined as “Mountain Turks” and they did not receive any special benefits, and in fact, laws were instituted in order to deny, and even erase, the separate identity of the Kurds. Beyond the ban on the Kurdish language, traditional Kurdish dress was banned and various villages with Kurdish names were forced to adopt Turkish ones.⁶²⁰

2.5.3 Sheikh Said Rebellion of 1925

The Kurdish revolt erupted in February 1925, led by an influential sheikh of the Nakshibendi dervish order, Sheikh Said. Ersin Kalaycioglu emphasized that the general resentment of the people in Eastern Anatolia was the main motive behind the rebellion. He underlines that “the more pious among the Sunni Muslims of Anatolia did not take the decision to abolish the Caliphate lightly. There was increasing criticism of Mustafa Kemal and the Republican regime among those affiliated with the religious establishment of the ancient regime of the Ottoman

⁶¹⁷ Zurcher, *Turkey*, 171. Howard, *History of Turkey*, 95.

⁶¹⁸ Kirisci, “*The Kurdish Question and Turkish Foreign Policy*,” 281.

⁶¹⁹ Zurcher, *Turkey*, 170. Howard, *History of Turkey*, 95.

⁶²⁰ Celik, *Contemporary Turkish Foreign Policy*, 33.

Empire. The most important and even critical development, which directly challenged the legitimacy of the Republican regime, occurred soon after the Caliphate was abolished, in eastern Anatolia.”⁶²¹

According to Zurcher, the leaders of the Azadi movement and Sheikh Said were planning for rebellion in May 1925; however, the rebellion broke out prematurely due to a shooting incident with gendarmeries in the town of Piran on February 8. Sheikh Said could not prevent the conflict. Evidently, some fugitives were hiding in the town and state officials asked Sheikh Said to collaborate in their arrest. While Sheikh Said was trying to mediate between state officials and the fugitives, a conflict erupted, and the gendarmes were killed during the armed conflict. This incident became the spark of the Sheikh Said Rebellion. After this spark, Sheikh Said and nearly 150 of his men started open revolt on February 13, 1925.⁶²² First of all Sheikh Said gave a sermon explaining the reasons for the revolt in the mosque of Piran the same day. Sheikh Said lamented that “the madrasas had been closed down; the Ministry of Religion and Pious Foundations had been abolished. In the newspapers a horde of irreligious writers wantonly insult religion and besmirch the name of our Lord the Prophet. I shall this very day, if only I can, start struggling and become one of those who contribute to the saving of religion.” Moreover, he summarized his demands as the reestablishment of the caliphate and of the “rule of Sharia.”⁶²³

The uprising found sympathizers and participants from among Kurdish tribes in southeastern Anatolia after Sheikh Said’s letters asking them for participation in the revolt. Nearly all the Zaza tribes and two large Kurmanji tribes of Kurds took part in the insurrection, but “the

⁶²¹ Kalaycioglu, *Turkish Dynamics*, 48.

⁶²² Toker, *Seyh Sait ve Isyani*, 21. Cemal, *Seyh Sait Isyani*, 24. Ozoglu, *From Caliphate to Secular State*, 89.

⁶²³ Toker, *Seyh Sait ve Isyani*, 21. Cemal, *Seyh Sait Isyani*, 24. Kalaycioglu, *Turkish Dynamics*, 49. Kalaycioglu, *Turkish Dynamics*, 48.

divisions between the Kurds showed themselves again: the Alevi Kurds fiercely attacked the Sunni insurgents.” In his letters Sheikh Said stressed the Islamic reasons for his insurrection. In one of these letters, Sheikh Said told Bozan Agha, the head of Izolli tribe in Urfa, “I am fighting against the people who aimed to destroy our religion which was sent us by God 1300 years ago. If nobody helps me, we all be ruined.”⁶²⁴ Sheikh Said sent another letter to Halil Bey, the head of Milli Tribe in Urfa. In that letter Sheikh Said emphasized that “the current government destroyed the Caliphate, the office of Sheikh ul-Islam and the Pious Foundations. Moreover, government imitated the infidels. The leaders of the government mocked with the principles of the religion and aimed to change them. I am requesting your help against the government.”⁶²⁵

The Kemalist Government did not notice the rebellion at the beginning. The first reaction of the government was to disregard the importance of Kurdish concerns. The rebellion was mentioned for first time in the Assembly on February 18, 1925. Hakki Tarik Bey, deputy of Giresun, asked a question about some rumors in the eastern provinces to the Minister of Interior. These reports said that Genc province was captured by Sheikh Said. Cemil Bey, Minister of Interior, answered this question as “even though there was brigandage led by Sheikh Said and his fellows, the Government took severe actions against them.” According to the Minister of Interior, the government thought that this rebellion would be suppressed within a few days.⁶²⁶ Turkish press was also sure that the rebellion was insignificant. The newspaper *Cumhuriyet* indicated that Sheikh Said and his 150 men were on the run from the Gendarmerie forces and looking for escape.

⁶²⁴ Zürcher, *Turkey*, 171. Cemal, *Seyh Sait İsyanı*, 45. Toker, *Seyh Sait ve İsyanı*, 27.

⁶²⁵ H. Selic, *Zaza Gercegi [The Zaza Reality]*, (Munich: Dicle-Firat Yayinlari, 1988), 36.

⁶²⁶ *TBMM ZC*, 18 Feb. 1925, v. 14, 123- 131.

Cumhuriyet asserted that Sheikh Said was encouraged and assisted by the British.⁶²⁷ The Kemalist assertion of a British hand on this rebellion was mentioned for first time by *Cumhuriyet*.

While the Kemalist approach to the rebellion was not serious at the beginning, the situation changed after February 23, 1925. The conflict spread to neighboring towns and cities around Piran, which led the government to take reactive measures. The state declared a state of emergency in more than 15 Kurdish-populated cities (Ergani, Diyarbakir, Elazig, Gene, Mus, Dersim, Mardin, Urfa, Siverek, Siirt, Bitlis, Van, Hakkari, Kigi and Hınıs in Erzurum) to prevent the spread of rebellion. Ali Fethi Bey's cabinet established martial law for a month in these cities.⁶²⁸ *Cumhuriyet* also described rebellion in the provinces of Ergani, Diyarbakir, and Genc. The newspaper indicated that the foreign provocation was a possible cause. While *Cumhuriyet* was sure about British provocation at the beginning of the rebellion, its line changed to a possible provocation instead of a decisive one.⁶²⁹ Another important meeting was held under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal, which *Cumhuriyet* described as leading to decisive measures a government declaration about this incident.⁶³⁰

On February 25, 1925, the reasons for martial law and the rebellion were discussed in the Assembly. Prime Minister Ali Fethi Bey explained the Government's position. He described the Nestorian Incident of 1924⁶³¹ which was suppressed by Government. After the suppression of the

⁶²⁷ "Seyh Said Maiyetiyle Beraber Genc Vilayetinde Bulunuyor" [Sheikh Said is in Genc with his Attendants], *Cumhuriyet*, 18 Feb. 1925, 1. "Seyh Said Isyani" [Sheikh Said Rebellion], *Cumhuriyet*, 22 Feb. 1925, 1.

⁶²⁸ *TBMM ZC*, 23 Feb. 1925, v. 14, 288.

⁶²⁹ "Seyh Said Bir Koy Isgal Etti" [Sheikh Said Invaded a Village], *Cumhuriyet*, 23 Feb. 1925, 1.

⁶³⁰ "Isyan Sahasi Tevsi ve uc Vilayete Sirayet Etmistir" [The Land of Rebellion was spread out in Three Provinces], *Cumhuriyet*, 24 Feb. 1925, 1.

⁶³¹ The Nestorian Uprising (7 August 1924- 26 September 1924) was the first real threat to the Turkish Republic. The Nestorians who settled in the borders between Iraq, Iran, and Turkey. After killing some of the Turkish officers by Nestorians in Hakkari province, the Turkish government sent a military unit to the region. At the end of

Nestorians, most rebels escaped to Iraq. There were some aftershocks of this incident still agitating the eastern provinces. According to the Prime Minister, Sheikh Said was connected to these seditious groups. Sheikh Said met with those opponents of the Government many times. Ali Fethi Bey enumerated the military measures that would suppress this rebellion soon. According to him, this rebellion aimed to achieve the Kurdish nationalist goals under the guise of reaction. Reestablishing the Sultanate of one of Abdulhamid II's son and reestablishing the Caliphate were only the cover stories of the rebellion.⁶³² Beyond Kurdish nationalism, Ali Fethi Bey underlined that Sheikh Said's propaganda, that "the Government destroyed Islam and Islamic laws", was also effective. Ali Fethi Bey described this rebellion as a reactionary one, similar to those seen in the late period of the Ottoman Empire, such as the "31 March Incident".⁶³³ Ali Fethi Bey declared that Islam had become a tool in this rebellion; therefore the Government needed to punish those rebels harshly. Kazim Karabekir Pasha, the leader of the Progressive Republican Party in the Assembly, also agreed with the Government in taking all measures against the rebellion. Martial law in the eastern provinces was accepted unanimously by the Grand National Assembly.⁶³⁴

September 1924, the incident was suppressed totally and the Nestorians escaped to Iraq. (Türkiye Cumhuriyetinde Ayaklanmalar, T.C. Genelkurmay Harp Tarihi Başkanlığı Resmi Yayınları, Seri No: 8, Genelkurmay Basımevi, Ankara, 1972, 483-86.)

⁶³² *TBMM ZC*, 25 Feb. 1925, v.14, 306-307.

⁶³³ 31 March Incident was an attempt to dismantle the Second Constitutional Era of the Ottoman Empire and replace it with an autocracy under Sultan/Caliph Abdul Hamid II. The counter coup began on 31 March on the Rumi calendar, which was the official calendar of the Ottoman Empire, but 13 April 1909 AD in the Georgian Calendar. The CUP controlled the state after the "Army of Action" stopped the turmoil in the capital city on April 24, 1909. As a consequence of the Incident, Sultan Abdul Hamid II was dethroned by the CUP.

⁶³⁴ *TBMM ZC*, 25 Feb. 1925, v.14, 308- 309. "Basvekil Fethi Bey Dun Meclis'te Izahat Verdi" [Prime Minister Fethi Bey Elucidated in the Assembly Yesterday], *Cumhuriyet*, 26 Feb. 1925, 1. Zurcher, *Turkey*, 171.

Ali Fethi Bey's Cabinet added a new article to the "Law of High Treason," which was amended to include the political use of religion among treasonable offences.⁶³⁵ In this new article, using religion and religious feelings for political activity or being a member of an association which aimed to use religion against the Government's policies was treason.⁶³⁶ *Cumhuriyet* also described this law as stopping people who used religion as a tool.⁶³⁷

When Ali Fethi Bey condemned the rebellion as a reactionary uprising, public opinion was mobilized by local Kemalists. As an example, the mayor of Adana sent a telegram which showed the loyalty of people of Adana to the Government. The Mayor displayed his eagerness to destroy the reactionaries who aimed to endanger the future of Turkish revolution.⁶³⁸ Mustafa Kemal gave his thanks to the local citizens of Adana.⁶³⁹ The branch of Turkish Hearths⁶⁴⁰ in Bolu likewise sent a telegram, which showed their hate to the reactionary uprising to Kemal.⁶⁴¹ Moreover, some of the Kurdish tribal leaders showed their loyalty to the regime by sending telegrams to the Grand National Assembly.⁶⁴² The correspondent of *Cumhuriyet* interviewed Zaro Agha, the oldest person in the world at that time. When the correspondent asked about the reactionary movement in Kurdish land, Zaro Agha condemned those rebels. As a Kurd, he declared that he did not know those people in Kurdish region and he described those rebels as "infidels".⁶⁴³

⁶³⁵ Zurcher, *Turkey*, 171.

⁶³⁶ *TBMM ZC*, 25 Feb. 1925, v.14, 309-311.

⁶³⁷ "Kuvvayi Kulliyemiz Isyan Sahasina Gitmektedir" [Our Total Forces are Going to the Rebellious Zones], *Cumhuriyet*, 25 Feb. 1925, 1.

⁶³⁸ *TBMM ZC*, 26 Feb. 1925, v.14, 351.

⁶³⁹ *Vakit*, 28 Feb. 1925, 1.

⁶⁴⁰ The Turkish Nationalist Association was established in 1912 to promote Turkish nationalism.

⁶⁴¹ *Altinyaprak*, 1 Mar. 1925, 3.

⁶⁴² *TBMM ZC*, 26 Feb. 1925, v.14, 351.

⁶⁴³ "Zaro Agha Ne diyor?" [What is Zaro Agha Saying?], *Cumhuriyet*, 28 Feb. 1925, 1.

In the meeting in Turkish Hearths, Halide Edip Hanim, one of the well-known Turkish novelist and nationalist and feminist political leader, also condemned reaction in eastern Turkey. In the meeting, she said illiterate people were seduced by local sheikhs. According to Halide Edip, the Republican administration aimed to raise its people to live in a modern way.⁶⁴⁴ However, Halide Edip barely escaped from the Kemalist regime's oppression just one year later when the Kemalist purge of opponents happened in 1926.

Reactionary rebellion was the main interpretation in the Kemalist press for the first period of the Sheikh Said Rebellion. In his column in *Cumhuriyet*, Yunus Nadi Bey indicated that the revolution could not tolerate these kinds of reactionary activities which caused bloodshed within the state. The unity of the Assembly was another point which Yunus Nadi Bey mentioned. The support of the opposition leader Kazim Karabekir Pasha for Ali Fethi Bey's cabinet in the martial law issue showed unity against internal and external enemies.⁶⁴⁵ Necmeddin Sadik Bey, editor of *Aksam*, agreed. There was no doubt about the character of the rebellion. It was a reactionary uprising. Even though it was led by Sheiks or was supported by foreigners, this rebellion was a reaction against the regime. Necmeddin Sadik Bey used the expression of "31 March". He believed that the regime could not allow another 31 March Incident anymore.⁶⁴⁶ The Kemalist jargon in this expression was shared by the magazine *Akbaba* also. The uprising in the eastern provinces of Turkey was identified with the 31 March Incident. However, *Akbaba* blamed some conservative deputies, such as Hoca Ziyaeddin Efendi, and newspapers for provoking this uprising. Moreover, *Akbaba* asserted that these newspapers abused the freedom of speech and freedom of the press.

⁶⁴⁴ "İrtica ve Memleket" [The Reaction and Homeland], *Cumhuriyet*, 28 Feb. 1925, 1.

⁶⁴⁵ Yunus Nadi, "İrtica ve İsyan" [Reaction and Rebellion], *Cumhuriyet*, 26 Feb. 1925, 1.

⁶⁴⁶ Necmeddin Sadik, "İrtica" [Reaction], *Aksam*, 26 Feb. 1925, 1.

Akbaba warned these conservative newspapers that if they had been published during the Government of Committee of Union and Progress, some of their members could have been executed and some newspapers banned.⁶⁴⁷

While the Kemalist orthodoxy saw the Sheikh Said Rebellion as a reactionary movement, the Kurdish nationalist character of the rebellion was emphasized in the Kemalist press also. *Cumhuriyet* asserted that one of the sons of Abdulhamid II was proclaimed the king of Kurdistan by the rebels.⁶⁴⁸ The Minister of Interior Cemil Bey pointed out that the rebels wanted to conquer Diyarbakir to establish an independent Kurdistan.⁶⁴⁹ According to *Cumhuriyet*, Kasim Bey, one of the leaders of the rebellion, said the rebels were agitated by British to establish an independent state.⁶⁵⁰ Kasim Bey was mentioned by the newspaper *Aksam* once more on May 19, 1925. While Sheikh Said said he mutinied only for religion and rejected the thought of an independent state,⁶⁵¹ Kasim Bey asserted that their only goal was establishing a Kurdish state.⁶⁵² Strikingly, at that time, Kasim Bey acted as a rebel, but, he was an agent of the Kemalist Government among the rebels and he was responsible for the capture of Sheikh Said. In the official periodical *Ayin Tarihi*, the rebellion was identified as a Kurdish nationalist rebellion which used religion as a guise. It also

⁶⁴⁷ “31 Mart” [31 March], *Akbaba*, 26 Feb. 1925, 1.

⁶⁴⁸ “Kurdistan Krali” [The King of Kurdistan], *Cumhuriyet*, 27 Feb. 1925, 1.

⁶⁴⁹ “Dahliye Vekili Cemil Bey’in Isyan Sahasindaki Son Vaziyet Hakkinda Gazetemize Beyanati” [The Minister of Interior Cemil Bey’s Statement about the Last Situation in the Rebellious Fields], *Aksam*, 11 Mar. 1925, 1.

⁶⁵⁰ “Isyanda Ingiliz Parmagi Oldugu Anlasildi” [The British Hand in the Rebellion was Revealed], *Cumhuriyet*, 21 Apr. 1925, 1.

⁶⁵¹ Necip Fazil Kisakurek, *Son Devrin Din Mazlumlari* [The Religious Victims of the Last Period], 10th ed., (Istanbul: Buyuk Dogu Yayinlari, 2008), 35-37. Cemal, *Seyh Sait Isyani*, 97-98.

⁶⁵² “Genc Isyaninin Muhakemesi Hakkinda Muhabirimizin Telgrafi” [The Telegraph of Our Correspondent about the Court of Genc Rebellion], *Aksam*, 19 May 1925, 1.

claimed Sheikh Said collaborated with Armenians and Nestorians to establish an independent and united Kurdish-Armenian state.⁶⁵³

Military measures were seen as effective solutions for suppressing the rebellion. In *Cumhuriyet*, Yunus Nadi Bey described the importance of the army as the core of the state which prevented not only the external threats but also the internal threat such as the Sheikh Said rebellion. He believed that the “iron hand” of the Turkish army would destroy this rebellion completely.⁶⁵⁴

Some of the scholars at that time pointed out the socio-economic conditions of the eastern provinces as the reasons of the rebellion. Mehmed Emin Bey, professor in the department of philosophy in Istanbul Darulfununu,⁶⁵⁵ emphasized the backwardness of the region. According to him, people lived in medieval conditions in the eastern provinces. They were not settled very well in that area. Their religious mentality was totally different than Turks. Their laws and customs were totally different than the Turkish society. Moreover, the ordinary people worked for the dignitaries and sheiks. Turks were far more modern than those people in the eastern provinces. Mehmed Emin Bey thought that the Turkish revolution was proper for the social level of the Turkish nation. However, the rebellious region was inferior to the Turkish level. Therefore, this inferiority created a favorable environment for the rebellion. The rebellion should be suppressed by military measures, but after that the intellectuals and youth organizations should do their duty: to educate those people who lived in that region. However, Mehmed Emin Bey’s proposal included a number of Turkification goals, for the mass in the eastern part of Turkey had to change their

⁶⁵³ *Ayin Tarihi* 5, no. 14 (May 1925), 3-4.

⁶⁵⁴ Yunus Nadi, “Yalnız Cehil ve Taassub mu?” [Is Only Ignorance and Bigotry?], *Cumhuriyet*, 27 Feb. 1925, 1.

⁶⁵⁵ Istanbul Darulfununu (Istanbul House of Multiple Sciences) was the sole university in the late period of the Ottoman Empire. It was reorganized as İstanbul Üniversitesi (Istanbul University) following the educational reforms of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in 1933.

beliefs and their future generation had to think, feel, and believe like Turks as a sole solution of their backwardness.⁶⁵⁶

The revolt became a serious one when the rebels occupied Elazig on February 24, 1925, and laid siege to the important military center of Diyarbakir at the end of February 1925.⁶⁵⁷ By the beginning of March the rebellion had spread southeast Turkey and seemed a serious threat to the republican regime. After the rebels' threat to Diyarbakir, the Kemalist government took strong countermeasures as soon as the extent of the insurrection became clear. The Kurdish rebels were now rapidly pushed back into the mountains. After armed clashes in many parts of the region surrounding Diyarbakir, the rebellion was violently suppressed by massive state forces and aerial bombardments. Sheikh Said was captured by the Turkish forces on April 15, 1925.⁶⁵⁸ The Kemalist press depicted this event as the victory of young Republic. Sheikh Said, labelled an oaf by Kemalists, deserved the iron fist of the Republic. Yunus Nadi Bey saw the capture of Sheikh Said as defeating the enemies of Republic.⁶⁵⁹ After the rebellion was over, the government through the military authorities and the independence tribunals dealt harshly with the Kurds. Sheikh Said was

⁶⁵⁶ Mehmed Emin Bey, "İrtica Karsisinda Genclik" [The Youth against the Reaction], *Anadolu Mecmuasi* 1, no: 9-10-11. (Jan.-Feb. 1925), 356-358.

⁶⁵⁷ "İrtica Hareketi Maatteessuf Tevsi Ediyor" [The Reaction Movement is spreading regrettably], *Cumhuriyet*, 25 Feb. 1925, 1. Price, *A History of Turkey*, 132.

⁶⁵⁸ Sevket Sureyya Aydemir, *İkinci Adam: 1884-1938 (The Second Man: 1884-1938)*, (Istanbul: Remzi Kitapevi, 1993), 300. Zürcher mistakenly gives the capture of Sheikh Said as April 27, 1925, *Turkey*, 172. Lewis, *The Emergence*, 261.

⁶⁵⁹ Yunus Nadi, "Cumhuriyet'in Zaferi" [The Victory of the Republic], *Cumhuriyet*, 17 Apr. 1925, 1.

sentenced to death, together with forty-six of his followers, by an ‘independence tribunal’ in Diyarbakir, on June 29, 1925.⁶⁶⁰

After the rebellion was suppressed totally in June 1925, large numbers of Kurds, more than 20,000 in all, were deported from the southeast and forcibly settled in the west of the country in where they were surrounded by Turkish peasants.⁶⁶¹ Beyond the deportation of Kurds, the Kemalist regime officially denied the existence of a separate Kurdish identity after 1925. Kurds were called as ‘Mountain Turks’ by the Kemalist government and were given the same rights as any Turkish citizen but without any national privileges.⁶⁶²

2.5.4 Takrir-i Sukun Kanunu (Law on the Maintenance of Order) and Elimination of the Opposition Party

Despite the consolidation of Mustafa Kemal’s hold on power in the elections of June-July 1923, another opposition group emerged after the second period of the Assembly was convened on August 11, 1923.⁶⁶³ Some individuals like Rauf Bey and Kazim Karabekir Pasha, who had won fame during the national struggle, had the political stature to compete with Mustafa Kemal for leadership roles within the People’s Party. These individuals were relatively more gradualist in their approach to many questions of modernization and political change. The establishment of the Republic caused some resentment within the Kemalist party.⁶⁶⁴ This faction within the party, labeled a “Secret Opposition” by Mustafa Kemal, started their opposition to Mustafa Kemal

⁶⁶⁰ “Seyhlerle Hımpalari İsyan ve Hiyanetlerinin Cezayı Sezasını Çektiler” [The Sheikhs and their Cohort Paid the Penalty of Their Rebellion and Treachery], *Cumhuriyet*, 30 Jun. 1925, 1. Lewis, *The Emergence*, 261. Özoglu, *From Caliphate to Secular State*, 90. Lundgren, *The Unwelcome Neighbor*, 43.

⁶⁶¹ Zürcher, *Turkey*, 172. Yalman, *Turkey in the World War*, 288. Price, *A History of Turkey*, 132.

⁶⁶² Price, *A History of Turkey*, 132. Zürcher, *Turkey*, 172.

⁶⁶³ Tamkoc, *The Warrior Diplomats*, 91.

⁶⁶⁴ Shissler, *Between Two Empires*, 187. Celik, *Contemporary Turkish Foreign Policy*, 32-33.

because of his authoritarian tendencies. Roderic Davison pointed out the characteristic of this opposition as:

Kemal was not, however unopposed. Many Turks were shocked at the abolition of the caliphate, and at the accompanying blows to Islamic institutions. Some of these men, along with others who were quite western-minded, were also concerned about the uninhibited power that Kemal was gathering into his own hands. Among them were several of his staunchest supporters from the early days of the Nationalist movement- men like Rauf (Orbay), Ali Fuad (Cebesoy) Kazim Karaekir and Dr. Adnan [Adivar] who were honest opponents of one man rule.⁶⁶⁵

Dietrich Jung emphasizes the reasons behind the establishment of an opposition party to

the Kemalist majority as:

The motives behind the opposition within the military- bureaucratic elite were twofold. In the first place, fundamental programmatic differences, concerning issues such as the idea of maintaining a constitutional monarchy, the position and strength of the legislature, and the role of the localities, had grown since the proclamation of the Republic. In the second place, strong personal existed among leading members of the independence movement, in which the 'edginess of several illustrious generals towards Mustafa Kemal's ascendancy' was of great importance.⁶⁶⁶

Hakan Ozoglu points out that the main struggle between the Kemalist mentality and the opposition's mentality as:

Differences in the second TGNA generally stemmed not from the content or the spirit of the laws discussed in parliament but rather from the methods employed to pass them. This was the main difference between the opposition in the first and the second TGNA. Most (though not all) members of the group that formed the Progressive Republican Party shared a political vision similar to that of Mustafa Kemal for the modernization of the state. Yet they were more responsive to the demands of the public and hence can be described as evolutionists. On the other hand, the other group, often regarded as the revolutionists, believed that there was no time to waste in introducing and promoting new reforms. People needed to be led, and the reforms, if possible, had to be forced top down for the good of the country.⁶⁶⁷

⁶⁶⁵ Davison, *The Modern Nations*, 130.

⁶⁶⁶ Jung and Piccoli, *Turkey at the Crossroads*, 71.

⁶⁶⁷ Ozoglu, *From Caliphate to Secular State*, 84.

When Mustafa Kemal demanded that all army commanders relinquish their seats in the Assembly and return to army posts in October 1924, Kazim Karabekir Pasha, Ali Fuat Pasha, and Refet Pasha instead relinquished their army commissions.⁶⁶⁸ They also resigned from the People's Party and, together with Rauf Bey, Adnan Bey, and other fellow critics of Mustafa Kemal formed the Terakkiperver Cumhuriyet Fırkası (Progressive Republican Party), in opposition to Mustafa Kemal's People's Party in November 1924.⁶⁶⁹ Kazim Karabekir Pasha became the president of the new party. There were, in total, thirty two deputies who broke with the People's Party caucus in parliament.⁶⁷⁰

The Progressive Republican Party had a more liberal program based on decreasing the role of the state to a minimum and introducing administrative decentralization. Beyond that, it emphasized democratic practices, the separation of powers, and civil liberties in its program. One of the main principles of the new party was its respectful approach to religion. Article 6 of the Progressive Republican Party's program specified that "the party is respectful of religious ideas and beliefs."⁶⁷¹

The establishment of an opposition party was not welcomed by Mustafa Kemal. Hakan Ozoglu emphasized that "Mustafa Kemal did not approve of the formation of the PRP as a political

⁶⁶⁸ Tamkoc, *The Warrior Diplomats*, 26. Davison, *The Modern Nations*, 130.

⁶⁶⁹ Howard, *History of Turkey*, 94. Kramer, *Islam Assembled*, 6. Vanderlippe, *The Politics of Turkish Democracy*, 21. Orga, *Phoenix Ascendant*, 154. Kinross, *Ataturk*, 448. Bahrapour labels the Progressive Republican Party as a "conservative party", *Turkey*, 16.

⁶⁷⁰ Howard, *History of Turkey*, 94. Celik, *Contemporary Turkish Foreign Policy*, 33. Miller, *The Ottoman Empire*, 556. Yerasimos gives this number as 22, Stefanos Yerasimos, "The Monoparty Period", in *Turkey in Transition: New Perspectives*, ed. Irvin C. Schick and Ertugrul Ahmet Tonak (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 83.

⁶⁷¹ Altunisik and Tur, *Turkey*, 17. Yerasimos, "The Monoparty Period," 83. Davison, *The Modern Nations*, 130. Celik, *Contemporary Turkish Foreign Policy*, 33. Zurcher, *Turkey*, 168.

opposition the leaders of which had the potential to replace his leadership.”⁶⁷² Like Ozoglu, Stefanos Yerasimos also underlines the dissatisfaction of Mustafa Kemal:

Three days after the foundation of the Progressive Party, on 20 November, Mustafa Kemal gathered the leaders of his party, told them of the “counterrevolutionary threat” provoked by the religious reaction, and made them understand that he wished to undertake extraordinary measures. But since the party was reluctant to follow, he understood that it would be necessary to drop some ballast. Thus, he let go his government consisting of the “hardliners” of his party under the presidency of Ismet Pasha; and he named a new Prime Minister, Fethi Bey (Okyar), who was known as a moderate. Nevertheless, from the outset, Mustafa Kemal was openly hostile toward the new party, portrayed it as reactionary, and sought the opportunity to break it. The occasion arose three months later, at the time of the first Kurdish uprising since the proclamation of the republic, that of Sheikh Said.⁶⁷³

The struggle of the Progressive Republican Party to stop autocracy in Turkey became a null after the Sheikh Said Rebellion. The rebellion gave an opportunity to the Kemalist Government to pressure the opposition. Government asked the Progressive Republican Party to close down its local branches for fear of arousing the religious feelings of people in that region. The PRP refused this initiative of the Kemalist Government.⁶⁷⁴ The PRP leaders told the Government that if some of its members agitated such feelings, the Government could prosecute if necessary.⁶⁷⁵ Beyond that, Kazim Karabekir Pasha, the chairman of Progressive Republican Party, gave his emphatic support to government policy in the east, both in the Assembly and in the press.

The Kemalist contradictions on the Kurds were seen in the change of Ali Fethi Bey’s Cabinet. Ali Fethi Bey, a moderate Kemalist, was forced to leave his position on March 2, 1925. Zurcher described the reasons behind this decision as: “the pressure of the hawks within

⁶⁷² Ozoglu, *From Caliphate to Secular State*, 88.

⁶⁷³ Yerasimos, “*The Monoparty Period*,” 83.

⁶⁷⁴ “İrtica ve Muhalifler” [Reaction and Opponents], *Cumhuriyet*, 2 Mar. 1925, p.1. Zurcher, *Turkey*, 171.

⁶⁷⁵ Yunus Nadi, “Muhalefet ve İrtica” [The Opposition and the Reaction], *Cumhuriyet*, 2 Mar. 1925, 1.

Republican People's Party on Fethi was rising, Ismet had already returned to Ankara and attended the cabinet meetings.”⁶⁷⁶ Kemalist orthodoxy alleged that Ali Fethi Bey was a docile man who could not deal with the rebellion in the eastern provinces very well. While the Assembly accepted martial law unanimously on February 25, 1925, the radical wing in the Kemalist party wanted more severe measures against the rebels just one week later this decision.⁶⁷⁷ During the discussion in the Assembly, Ali Fethi Bey explained that his Government had become a minority in the party discussion therefore he wanted to leave his position. On March 2, 1925, Fethi Bey lost a vote of confidence by the RPP faction when Mustafa Kemal himself sided with the hardliners who demanded stronger measures.⁶⁷⁸ Rauf Bey, one of the opposition leaders in the Assembly, criticized Ali Fethi Bey's decision, for leaving his position would sow doubts within the state and abroad. Rauf Bey demanded more information from the Prime Minister about his decision.⁶⁷⁹ The next day, a new Cabinet was formed by Ismet Pasha. Ali Fuat Pasha, another opposition leader, criticized the change of the Cabinet as a secret plan. He mentioned that just a few days prior the Assembly gave a vote of confidence to Ali Fethi Bey's Cabinet. However, after a secret meeting in the Republican People's Party, Kemalist deputies repudiated their vote of confidence in the Prime Minister. According to Ali Fuat Pasha, there was another reason for this change: “the rebellions and reactionary movements have to be suppressed. The rebels and reactionaries have to be punished. There is no doubt about this. But, I request from the Government not to carry out the measures which restrict and oppress the rights and freedom of people in the administration.” The

⁶⁷⁶ Zurcher, *Turkey*, 171.

⁶⁷⁷ *Aksam*, 3 Mar. 1925, 1.

⁶⁷⁸ Zurcher, *Turkey*, 171. Lewis, *The Emergence*, 261. Ozoglu, *From Caliphate to Secular State*, 100.

⁶⁷⁹ *TBMM ZC*, 3 Mar. 1925, v. 15, 110-111.

new Cabinet of Ismet Pasha received a vote of confidence from 153 deputies on March 4, 1925. 23 deputies were opposed.⁶⁸⁰

The concerns of Ali Fuat Pasha became a fact after the Law on the Maintenance of Order. Following the government's formation, a drastic 'Law on the Maintenance of Order' was rushed through the Assembly, giving extraordinary and, in effect, dictatorial powers to the government for two years on March 4, 1925. This law, which remained in effect until 1929, provided the administrative basis for the government's authoritarian tendencies. It effectively served the Kemalist regime in crushing political opposition, silencing critical journalists and rushing through the cultural reforms.⁶⁸¹ In the first article of this law, the Government was empowered to ban by administrative measure any organization or publication it considered might cause disturbance to law and order for two years.⁶⁸²

In the parliamentary discussions about the Law on the Maintenance of Order, the first article was interpreted as violating the Constitution by the opposition. Moreover, the opposition argued that the law would allow the banning of any group or publication deemed a threat to national security.⁶⁸³ Feridun Fikri Bey, deputy of Dersim, and Zeki Bey, deputy of Gumushane, opposed this law because of its clash with the Constitution. This law gave the Government authority to carry out death sentences by itself. Beyond this, Feridun Fikri Bey noted the broad meaning of "huzur" (order). According to him, violating order had a vast meaning and it was not easy to restrict it. Moreover, Feridun Fikri believed that the Government would control all political

⁶⁸⁰ *TBMM ZC*, 4 Mar. 1925, v. 15, 128-129.

⁶⁸¹ Lewis, *The Emergence*, 261. Howard, *History of Turkey*, 95. Ozoglu, *From Caliphate to Secular State*, 105. Altunisik and Tur, *Turkey*, 17. Kalaycioglu, *Turkish Dynamics*, 50. Jung and Piccoli, *Turkey at the Crossroads*, 30.

⁶⁸² *TBMM ZC*, 4 Mar. 1925, v. 15, 131. Celik, *Contemporary Turkish Foreign Policy*, 33. Zurcher, *Turkey*, 171.

⁶⁸³ Howard, *History of Turkey*, 95.

actions and publications of the press under this law. Therefore, he was against this law as opposed to the Constitution, Republic, and national will.⁶⁸⁴ The president of the opposition party Kazim Karabekir Pasha was also against this law because of its diminution of national sovereignty. According to him, after this law, the voice of deputies could be heard only in the Grand National Assembly. Kazim Karabekir warned the Government this law would dishonor the history of the Republic.⁶⁸⁵ Kemalist press blamed the objections of the opponents as “bizarre” immediately.⁶⁸⁶

The Kemalist press welcomed the Law on the Maintenance of Order. Yunus Nadi Bey was one of the advocates of the law. In his article in *Cumhuriyet*, he emphasized that the law was necessary because of the recent events in the state. Even though the law was not appropriate to the spirit of the republic, Ismet Pasha was forced to accept it to rescue the Republic from a reactionary rebellion. Yunus Nadi Bey admitted the law was severe, but the Government did not demand this law from delight in violence or imperious ambition but to defend the future of state.⁶⁸⁷

The freedom of press was under the attack of the Kemalist deputies during debate. Recep Bey, Minister of Defence, directly attacked the Istanbul press. According to the Minister, the Istanbul press wanted to destroy the authority of Government. It depicted an Assembly of debauched and self-seeking people. Their publication affected especially the ignorant.⁶⁸⁸ While the Kemalist majority attacked the Istanbul press, the Minister of Interior gave an interview to the correspondent of *Aksam*. In this interview, Cemil Bey said that the law’s purpose was not imposing

⁶⁸⁴ TBMM ZC, 4 Mar. 1925, v. 15, 132-133.

⁶⁸⁵ TBMM ZC, 4 Mar. 1925, v. 15, 134-135.

⁶⁸⁶ “Takriri Sukun Kanunu Nasil Kabul Edildi” [How Was the Law on the Maintenance of Order Accepted?], *Cumhuriyet*, 6 Mar. 1925, 1.

⁶⁸⁷ Yunus Nadi, “Takriri Sukun Kanunu” [The Law on the Maintenance of Order], *Cumhuriyet*, 7 Mar. 1925, 1.

⁶⁸⁸ TBMM ZC, 4 Mar. 1925, v. 15, 139. Ozoglu, *From Caliphate to Secular State*, 103.

censorship on newspapers but liability on people who caused factions within the state.⁶⁸⁹ However, the Kemalist Government took severe measures against the press immediately. Eight of the most important conservative, liberal, and even Marxist newspapers and periodicals, such as *Tevhid-i Efkar*, *Son Telgraf*, *Istiklal*, *Sebilurresad*, *Aydinlik* and *Orak-Cekic*, were banned by the Government. The Kemalist regime left the government organs *Hakimiyet-i Milliye* (National Sovereignty) in Ankara and *Cumhuriyet* (Republic) in Istanbul as the only national papers.⁶⁹⁰ The Minister of Interior pointed out that some of those newspapers were banned for using religion as a tool in the politics and some of them because of their objection to the current form of the government.⁶⁹¹

The freedom of press suffered a blow after the Law on the Maintenance of Order was accepted by the Assembly on March 4, 1925. The Kemalist regime's long term dissatisfaction with the Istanbul press ended after this law was effectuated. The ban of the conservative and socialist publications left the Kemalist press as the only source of information for public opinion. Therefore, the Sheikh Said Rebellion had presented an opportunity to silence the press opponents of the Kemalist regime.

After the law was effectuated, Independence Tribunals were reestablished in two different locations, one in the rebellious region and the other in Ankara. Mustafa Kemal used these tribunals as a weapon for the prosecution of political opponents and he was no longer ready to share his

⁶⁸⁹ "Takriri Sukun Kanunu ve Isyan Sahasindaki Son Vaziyet Hakkinda Dahiliye Vekilinin Gazetemize Soyledikleri" [The Statements of the Ministry of Interior about the Law on the Maintenance of Order and the Last Situation of the Rebellious Fields], *Aksam*, 6 Mar. 1925, 1.

⁶⁹⁰ "Takriri Sukun Kanunundan Sonra" [After the Law on the Maintenance of Order], *Aksam*, 7 Mar. 1925, 1. Celik, *Contemporary Turkish Foreign Policy*, 33. Zurcher, *Turkey*, 172. Price, *A History of Turkey*, 132

⁶⁹¹ "Kapatilan Gazeteler" [The Newspapers which were Shut Down], *Aksam*, 12 Mar. 1925, 1.

power with other social or political groups that had supported his case in the war of independence.⁶⁹² The Independence Tribunal in Ankara published a declaration proclaiming that people who used religion as a tool in their personal and political aims would be punished severely.⁶⁹³

The Kemalist press started to attack opponents after the rebellion had ended in mid-1925. Yunus Nadi Bey criticized the opposition leader Kazim Karabekir Pasha, who had sown doubts in public opinion during the debate over the Law on the Maintenance of Order.⁶⁹⁴ *Cumhuriyet* also mentioned that the program of the opposition party had some points that should be investigated.⁶⁹⁵ Beyond that, all the leading journalists from Istanbul were arrested and brought before the Independence Tribunal in the East. Eventually they were released, but they were not allowed to resume their work because of the strict control of the Kemalist regime.⁶⁹⁶

The Sheikh Said Rebellion gave a great opportunity to Mustafa Kemal to ban the first opposition party in the Grand National Assembly. The Rebellion resulted in the closing down of Progressive Republican Party branches in eastern Anatolia on May 25, 1925. Correspondingly,

⁶⁹² *Aksam*, 5 Mar. 1925, 1. "İstiklal Mahkemeleri Teskili ve Takriri Sukun Kanunu Kabul Edildi" [The Establishment of the Independence Tribunal and the Law on the Maintenance of Order Were Accepted], *Cumhuriyet*, 5 Mar. 1925, 1. Howard, *History of Turkey*, 95. Zürcher, *Turkey*, 172. Lewis, *The Emergence*, 261. Kramer, *Islam Assembled*, 6.

⁶⁹³ "Ankara İstiklal Mahkemesi Millete Karsi Bir Beyanname Nesretti" [The Ankara Independence Tribunal Published a Declaration to the People], *Cumhuriyet*, 13 Mar. 1925, 1.

⁶⁹⁴ Yunus Nadi, "Cumhuriyet'in Zaferi" [The Victory of Republic], *Cumhuriyet*, 17 Apr. 1925, 1.

⁶⁹⁵ "Muhalifler ve Irtica" [The Opponents and the Reaction], *Cumhuriyet*, 17 Apr. 1925, 1.

⁶⁹⁶ Ozoglu, *From Caliphate to Secular State*, 107-109. Zürcher, *Turkey*, 172.

eight days later, on June 3, 1925, the government, based on the Law on the Maintenance of Order and on the advice of the Independence Tribunal, closed down the Progressive Republican Party.⁶⁹⁷

According to the tribunal, members of the party had supported the rebellion and tried to exploit religion for political purposes. The relationship between the opposition party and the rebellion was systematically inculcated by the Kemalist press at that time. According to *Cumhuriyet*, Sheikh Said confessed that he liked the Progressive Republican Party and the newspapers *Sebilurresad* and *Tevhid-i Efkar*.⁶⁹⁸ Not only the opposition party but also the Istanbul press came under attack. *Cumhuriyet* asserted that Sheikh Said had confessed the publications of the Istanbul press influenced his thoughts and actions.⁶⁹⁹

The Progressive Republican Party, established by the close friends of Mustafa Kemal, was banned and its leaders expelled from political life after June 1925. However, this was only the beginning. The final blow to the opposition came after the assassination plot on Mustafa Kemal in June 1926. Mustafa Kemal spent May and June 1926 on an extended inspection tour of the south and west of the country. When he was about to arrive in Izmir on June 15, 1926, a plot to assassinate him was uncovered. The organizer Ziya Hursid Bey, former deputy of Lazistan in the first period of the Assembly, opposed the abolition of the caliphate and also nourished a personal grudge against Mustafa Kemal. He was arrested with his friends before they achieved their goal.

⁶⁹⁷ “Terakkiperver Merkez ve Subaati Sed Edildi” [The Center and Branches of Progressive Party were Shut Down], *Cumhuriyet*, 6 Jun. 1925, 1. Kramer, *Islam Assembled*, 6. Bahrapour, *Turkey*, 17. Zurcher, *Turkey*, 172. Lewis, *The Emergence*, 261. Yerasimos, “*The Monoparty Period*,” 83.

⁶⁹⁸ “Seyh Said, Murteci gazeteler ve Terakkiperverler” [Sheikh Said, The Reactionary Newspapers and The Members of Progressive Republican Party], *Cumhuriyet*, 8 Jun. 1925, 1. Zurcher, *Turkey*, 172. Howard, *History of Turkey*, 96. Celik, *Contemporary Turkish Foreign Policy*, 33.

⁶⁹⁹ “Seyh Said ve Himpalarinin Muhakemesi” [The Court of Sheikh Said and His Cohorts], *Cumhuriyet*, 2 Jun. 1925, 1.

Beyond the plotters, 21 members of parliament from the former Progressive Republican Party were arrested as organizers and members of the assassination plan also.⁷⁰⁰

Accordingly, Rauf Bey, Kazim Karabekir Pasha, Ali Fuat Pasha, Refet Pasha, and some other members of the assembly and minor officials were tried by the Independence Tribunal in Izmir in June 1926. The trial began on 20 June in the Alhambra cinema in Izmir; the presiding judge was Ali Cetinkaya, an old soldier, a deputy, and a veteran of the Kemalist cause from the beginning. On 13 July sentences of death were pronounced against the accused, and carried out the next day. Rauf Bey was tried in absentia for at the time he was in self-imposed exile in Europe. He was sentenced to ten years' banishment. While some opponents of minor importance were executed, old friends of Mustafa Kemal, such as Kazim Karabekir Pasha, Ali Fuat Pasha and others were acquitted. The trial was a decisive blow to the opposition. Most of the war heroes appeared in court and after the decision they were totally expelled from political life in Turkey during Mustafa Kemal's lifetime.⁷⁰¹

The Kemalist press agitated the public opinion against these people. Falih Rifki wrote in *Hakimiyet-i Milliye* that "antagonism to Mustafa Kemal was the apparent sign of the treason to the country. Any enemy of the Turkish nation loves him and any of his antagonists is the friend of Turkish nation. This is impossible."⁷⁰² Moreover, Falih Rifki Bey exalted Mustafa Kemal as "you are our father and will always be at the head of us." Another pro-Kemalist Yunus Nadi Bey voiced his feelings as "they wanted to kill Gazi Mustafa Kemal, the president of Turkey. They wanted to

⁷⁰⁰ Zurcher, *Turkey*, 174. Davison, *The Modern Nations*, 133. Lewis, *The Emergence*, 260. Jung and Piccoli, *Turkey at the Crossroads*, 71.

⁷⁰¹ Lewis, *The Emergence*, 260. Tamkoc, *The Warrior Diplomats*, 26. Howard, *History of Turkey*, 96. Davison, *The Modern Nations*, 133.

⁷⁰² *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, 19 Jun. 1926, 1.

shoot him in the head and kill the great Turk who saved the Turkish nation. Finally, they would attempt to kill the symbol of Turkish nation, Mustafa Kemal. What kind of lofty thoughts and purposes are these?”⁷⁰³ The Kemalist press exalted the name of Mustafa Kemal as the symbol of Turkish nation and any criticism of him was tantamount high treason. Therefore, after this incident it would be impossible to criticize Mustafa Kemal.

2.5.5 Cult of Personality of Mustafa Kemal After the Establishment of the Kemalist Autocracy

Eliminating the oppositions enabled the creation of an autocratic regime in Turkey in 1926. The image of Mustafa Kemal was exalted and his cult of personality was established by erecting his statues and monuments throughout Turkey. Fikret Baskaya summarizes this situation as “there was not any other leader except Mustafa Kemal had statues and monuments both in his lifetime and after his death.”⁷⁰⁴

The epidemic of erecting the statues of Mustafa Kemal started in Istanbul in 1925. The Istanbul Municipality decided to erect a bronze statue of Mustafa Kemal in Gulhane Park, close to the Marmara Sea.⁷⁰⁵ Heinrich Krippel, the Austrian sculptor, was invited to Turkey for erecting this statue. Mustafa Kemal posed in front of him almost two hours.⁷⁰⁶ Before his departure to Vienna, Heinrich Krippel had an interview with the Turkish press. He emphasized that he would be successful because he was inspired by the great person in Cankaya, that is, Mustafa Kemal.⁷⁰⁷

⁷⁰³ *Cumhuriyet*, 27 Jun. 1926, 1.

⁷⁰⁴ Fikret Baskaya, *Paradigmanın İflası [The Failure of Paradigm]*, (Ankara: Ozgur Universite, 2004), 88.

⁷⁰⁵ “İstanbul’da İlk Heykel” [The First Sculpture in Istanbul], *Aksam*, 29 May 1925, 1.

⁷⁰⁶ “Gazi’nin Heykeli” [The Sculpture of Ghazi], *Babalik*, 18 Jun. 1925, 1.

⁷⁰⁷ “Heykeltras Krippel Yarın Gidiyor” [The Sculptor Krippel is Going Tomorrow], *Aksam*, 25 Jul. 1925, 1.

The foundation stone of the first statue to Mustafa Kemal was laid in August 1925. The local governor and officials organized a ceremony to celebrate this event.⁷⁰⁸ After the statue was erected, the dedication ceremony was held in April 1926. However, the first statue was not approved by Turkish authorities. The head of sculpture was not look like Mustafa Kemal and the position of the arm in the statue was not accepted by the experts.⁷⁰⁹ Necmeddin Sadik Bey objected to erecting this statue in Istanbul. He saw no correlation between this statue and the genius, achievement, and personality of Ghazi Mustafa Kemal. He found this statue unattractive. Therefore, Ghazi could not be represented in this way and the citizens of Istanbul could not give as a gift to their Savior such a bad example as this statue. Necmeddin Sadik Bey saw the importance of a great statue of Mustafa Kemal as “after for many centuries, the first time a statue is erected in Istanbul, the most modern city of Turkey. Therefore, this statue has to be one of the most important statues in the world; otherwise it would be a shame for the citizens of Istanbul.” Necmeddin Sadik Bey advised local administrators that they had to find a great sculptor who would erect the best statue in the world. Necmeddin Sadik Bey exalted Mustafa Kemal as the most important person of the century, and his statue should be perfect, particularly since sculpture had been banned for many centuries. Moreover, Necmeddin Sadik Bey criticized the chosen place erecting of this statue. To him, Sarayburnu was not an appropriate place since it lacked population; therefore, the square of Sultanahmet or Ayasofya would be better for this statue.⁷¹⁰ Finally the statue was erected in Sarayburnu on October 4, 1926.⁷¹¹

⁷⁰⁸ “Sarayburnu’ndaki Bu Sabahki Merasim” [The Morning Ceremony at Sarayburnu], *Aksam*, 26 Aug. 1925, 1. *BCA*, 27 Aug. 1925, Folder No: 19, Document No: 1.1.9.

⁷⁰⁹ “Gazi’nin Heykeli Dun Acildi” [The Sculpture of Ghazi Was Unveiled Yesterday], *Aksam*, 4 Apr. 1926, 1.

⁷¹⁰ Necmeddin Sadik, “Bu Heykel Dikilemez” [This Sculpture cannot be erected], *Aksam*, 6 Apr. 1926, 1.

⁷¹¹ “Gazi’nin Heykeli Yarin Aciliyor” [Ghazi’s Sculpture Is Unveiling Tomorrow], *Aksam*, 3 Oct. 1926, 1.

As Krippel's sculpture was not accepted by the Kemalist press, these newspapers promoted bizarre suggestions. One was erecting a statue of Mustafa Kemal on the Maiden's Tower of Istanbul. According to this plan, the statue should be faced to Europe, and its arms should be directed to the Mediterranean Sea and the Black Sea. The correspondent of *Aksam* found this very interesting.⁷¹²

Not only the local administrator was interested in erecting a statue in Istanbul but the Government decided on another one in Ankara also. The Kemalist Government signed another contract with Krippel to erect a statue of Mustafa Kemal in Ankara. Krippel brought models to show Mustafa Kemal of the future statue in Ankara. According to *Aksam*, this statue would be seventeen meters in height and would have three figures around the statue.⁷¹³

Erecting a statue of Mustafa Kemal became a race between the Kemalis administrators and local notables. The local newspaper *Türk Sozu* started a campaign to erect a beautiful statue in a public garden in Adana. The newspaper advised the municipality to create the statue "while the dear fellow countryman of Adana is showing the way of felicity."⁷¹⁴ The municipality of Bursa and its branch of Republican People's Party sent a committee to Ankara to inform Mustafa Kemal of their decision to erect one of his statues in Bursa. The citizens of Sivas sent a committee to thank to the President in Ankara also.⁷¹⁵ The mayor of Corum indicated that in the celebration of

⁷¹² "Gazi'nin Heykeli Hakkında Bir Sanatkarımızın Fikri" [The Opinion of one of Our Sculptors about the Ghazi's Sculpture], *Aksam*, 25 Apr. 1926, 1.

⁷¹³ "Krippel'in Getirdiği Heykel Modeli" [The Sculpture Model Which Was Brought by Krippel], *Aksam*, 25 Nov. 1925, 1.

⁷¹⁴ *Babalık*, 18 Jun. 1925, 1.

⁷¹⁵ *BCA*, 21 Mar. 1926, Folder no: 116, Document No: 1.1.16. *BCA*, 27 Mar. 1926, Folder No: 118, Document No: 1.1.18.

the Republic Day they laid the base of the statue of Mustafa Kemal which would be the temple of their lofty aim.⁷¹⁶

Destroying the opposition and purging opponents from the politics enabled the establishment of an autocracy in Turkey in 1926. After that year, the cult of personality of Mustafa Kemal was created by Kemalists. Erecting the statues of Mustafa Kemal was the first step in this cult. Firstly, the mayor of Istanbul decided to erect a statue of Mustafa Kemal in Sarayburnu, close to the Topkapi Palace, thus showing a new Sultan of Turkey to the public. Moreover, erecting statues was a major affront to the religious identity of Turks. Statues had been banned by Islamic thought for many centuries; however, Mustafa Kemal paid no attention to this ban. His encouragement promoted his statues in every city of Turkey after 1926. Local notables showed their loyalty to Mustafa Kemal by erecting his statues and bowed to them to show their respect.

In conclusion, the abolition of Sultanate in 1922 and Caliphate in 1924 broke the traditional political structure in Turkey. The modernization and secularization of Turkey concerned conservatives over the future of society. After the abolition of the Caliphate, traditional schools, the madrasas, were banned by the Government in 1924. The religious character of the society was under attack by the Kemalist secularization. Religious sentiments were stronger in the eastern Turkey among the Kurds, who felt loyal to the Caliph in the meaning of fraternity in Islam. The Caliphate was the common tie between Turks and Kurds in the society and cutting this tie made Kurds disappointed. The fury of people in eastern Turkey produced the Sheikh Said Rebellion in 1925, which started on February 13, 1925 and spread rapidly to eastern cities. The Rebellion was suppressed on April 15, 1925 after the surrender of Sheikh Said. The Rebellion gave a good chance

⁷¹⁶ “Cumhuriyet Bayramı Dolayısıyla Gazi’ye Cekilen Telgraflar” [The Telegraphs Which Were Sent to Ghazi Because of the Republic Day], *Corum Vilayet Gazetesi*, 5 Nov. 1928, 1.

to the Kemalist regime to ban the opposition Progressive Republican Party from the politics through the Law on the Maintenance of Order accepted on March 4, 1925. Therefore, the rebellion was a turning point in establishing Kemalist autocracy. One of the consequences of this autocracy was creating the cult of Mustafa Kemal by erecting his sculptures in every part of Turkey.

Chapter 3 - Kemalist Reforms in Social and Legal Structure of Turkey

After the establishment of the Kemalist single-party regime, which was ensured by the help of the extraordinary laws in the political structure of Turkey in 1925, social and legal reforms were launched and implemented by the Kemalist Government in a Jacobin way. For modernizing a nation, Mustafa Kemal and his allies gave a great importance to these reforms. The significance of social and legal reforms cannot be gainsaid during the Kemalist regime. However, these top down reforms were implemented by the force of the Law on the Maintenance of Order, which was accepted in March 1925.

While the Kemalist orthodoxy asserts that there is an affinity between republicanism and democracy and Mustafa Kemal insisted that republicanism was synonymous with democracy in 1933,⁷¹⁷ the reality was totally different than this assertion. The style of elections and the mentality of the elected deputies denied this concept. The character of the Turkish elections was summarized very well in a *New York Times*’ articles in 1927. In the caption, the newspaper indicated the notion of election in Turkey as: “Kemal will pick his parliament.” The opposition was barred by the Law on the Maintenance of Order and the single party regime consolidated its power. This situation led to Mustafa Kemal’s designation as an “autocratic president.” Moreover, the confession of Mustafa Kemal’s friends gave a great detail about the mechanism of the regime: “his word is law is frequently said of Kemal, but his final and fully control of the sovereign assembly will turn this worshipful phrase into plain reality.”⁷¹⁸

⁷¹⁷ Afet Inan, *Mustafa Kemal Atatürk'ten Yazdiklarim [My Writings from Mustafa Kemal Atatürk]*, (Ankara: Kultur Bakanligi Yayinlari, 1981), 164.

⁷¹⁸ “Kemal Will Pick His Parliament”, *the New York Times*, 1 Aug. 1927, 4.

Beyond the elections, the strong popular demonstrations against the Kemalist regime after the social reforms showed how people grew tired of the authoritarian tendencies of the politicians who still disregarded their interests and concerns. Even though the name of the regime was changed to a Republic, public opinion was still ignored by the administrators. *The New York Times* indicated about this reality from the mouths of the Kemalist leaders as: “ this one-man rule, Kemal’s friends contend, is needed for ten years or more, for they consider their soldier chief, the man who balked the Allies, a great, ruthlessly patriotic leader who must guide the weak young nation until it learns to walk alone.”⁷¹⁹ From this perspective, the new ruling elites wanted to continue a single party regime until they felt the Turkish people were mature.

The main declared goal of the Kemalist regime in modernization was to destroy the obsolete institutions and notions of the religious structure in Turkey. To achieve their goals of modernizing Turkey, Kemalists tried to change the Turkish society in many ways. They wanted to dismiss Islam from the social and legal structure of Turkey. People’s lives and life styles, which were seen as obsolete and backward by the Kemalists, were exposed to the attacks of Kemalist modernization. The authoritarian Kemalist regime tried to change people’s traditional costumes, institutions, and beliefs in a harsh way by the help of strict laws.

This research will show the continuation of the Ottoman reforms under the Kemalist leadership, contrary to the Kemalist orthodoxy which has seen Mustafa Kemal as the main source of all reformation movements for creating his cult of personality. The main difference between the Kemalist reforms and the previous eras was the high-speed of the Kemalist reforms. This research will show dissatisfactions among the Turkish people because of this precipitancy also.

⁷¹⁹ Ibid, 4.

3.1 The Dress Code: The Hat Law of 1925

After crushing the opposition party and silencing critical journalists, the struggle of power ended with the victory of the Kemalists in the political arena in 1925. After this victory, Mustafa Kemal tried to change the society top down methods in a Jacobin way by using his political power. He started this change firstly by changing people's attire.⁷²⁰ The main motive in his mind in this issue was that participation in European civilization would be possible by changing the outer appearance of the Turkish people. Wearing different clothes or a different headdress was seen as "being peculiar" by the Kemalist elites at that time. *The New York Times* indicated that "Mustapha Kemal and his associates evidently want the Turks to cease being a peculiar people, in either garments or habits."⁷²¹ Mustafa Kemal strongly believed that the Turkish nation needed to accept the entire values of the modern and civilized nations. Therefore, the Turkish people must follow the civilized nations firmly and accept hats as a headdress as a symbol of this process. He strongly advocated this idea and started his campaign against fez, which was seen as a symbol of the past.⁷²² In his six-day long speech in 1927, Mustafa Kemal pointed out the importance of banning the fez as: "Gentlemen, it was necessary to abolish the fez, which sat on our heads as a sign of ignorance, of fanaticism, of hatred to progress and civilization, and to adopt in its place the hat, the customary headdress of the whole civilized world, thus showing, among other things, that no difference existed in the manner of thought between the Turkish nation and the whole family of civilized mankind."⁷²³

⁷²⁰ Kalaycioglu, *Turkish Dynamics*, 56.

⁷²¹ "New Customs for Young Turks", *the New York Times*, 19 Sep. 1925, 14.

⁷²² Davison, *The Modern Nations*, 131. Bisbee, *The New Turks*, 21. Price, *A History of Turkey*, 136. Howard, *History of Turkey*, 96.

⁷²³ Kinzer, *Crescent and Star*, 44. Jung and Piccoli, *Turkey at the Crossroads*, 60. Lewis, *The Emergence*, 263.

Bernard Lewis interprets this Kemalist reform on the ground of politics as: “The events of 1925 had shown that the forces of reaction were still powerfully entrenched, and able to offer serious resistance to the progress of Westernization. The removal of the Caliphate had not sufficed; a further shock was necessary- a traumatic impact that would shake every man in the country into the realization that the old order had gone, and a new one come in its place. The fez was the last bastion of Muslim identification and separateness. The fez must go.”⁷²⁴ Like Lewis, Ahmed Emin Yalman emphasizes this reform as one of the important struggles between Kemalists and the “reactionary front” as a political matter. He points out that “the Turkish fez had embodied one of the few fortified positions left to reactionaries. They instinctively felt that the abandonment of the fez would mean the end of their power, that it would put the seal on the liberation of the people from the influence of religious tradition.”⁷²⁵

Merve Kavakci emphasizes this ideology as: “Ataturk utilized in implementing his project of social change the introduction of immediate changes in the appearance of women and men as symbols of westernization. The hat law, which mandated Turkish men to wear hats in lieu of Islamic fez, was introduced within this context.”⁷²⁶ Yael Navaro-Yashin describes this policy in the same orthodox way also as: “...his hat law of 1925 prohibited the wearing of fez, a symbol of ‘Orient’ in the eyes of Westerners, and decried its associated Ottoman social rankings. The bowler hat to be donned by men was to symbolize the association of the new republic with western as

⁷²⁴ Lewis, *The Emergence*, 262-263.

⁷²⁵ Yalman, *Turkey in the World War*, 286.

⁷²⁶ Merve Kavakci Islam, *Headscarf Politics in Turkey: A Postcolonial Reading*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 18.

opposed to Islamic civilization.”⁷²⁷ Anil Cecen, who shares the Kemalist orthodoxy like the others, thought about this change as a necessity to create a modern Turk.⁷²⁸ Moreover, Ayten Sezer Arig strongly believes that people’s minds would be changed by changing their outer appearances. Therefore, the Kemalist Government had a very strict policy on this issue from 1925 to 1934.⁷²⁹

While Yashin thinks that this reform elevated the situation of Turkish women in society and “with the hat law, Ataturk also encouraged men to be tolerant to their wives and daughters’ dressing habits”⁷³⁰, this assertion is not totally true. This Law outlawed the traditional head garments for men in favor of the Western hat, through no comparable policies were implemented for women.⁷³¹ Therefore, the Kemalist Government implemented Western hats by the force of Hat Law of 1925, but, the change of women’s headgear was left to some time in future. Ann Dismorr emphasizes this Kemalist attitude as “it was regarded as too delicate a challenge to take on.”⁷³²

3.1.1 The Headdress Reform in the Ottoman Empire before the Hat Law

The Hat Law of 1925 was one of the Kemalist top down reform. Mazhar Mufit Kansu, one of the closest friends of Mustafa Kemal, mentioned that Mustafa Kemal had a project to change the attire of Turkish society in 1919 in his memoirs.⁷³³ Even though there was no clear proof to

⁷²⁷ Yael Navaro-Yashin, *Faces of the State: Secularism and Public Life in Turkey*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 19-20.

⁷²⁸ Cecen, *Kemalism*, 109.

⁷²⁹ Ayten Sezer Arig, “Ataturk Turkiyesi’nde Kilik Kiyafette Cagdaslasma” [*Modernizing the Dress in Ataturk’s Turkey*], (Ankara: Siyasal Kitabevi, 2007), 33.

⁷³⁰ Navaro-Yashin, *Faces of the State*, 20.

⁷³¹ Ozlem Denli, “Freedom of Religion: Secularist Policies and Islamic Challenges,” in *Human Rights in Turkey*, ed. Zehra Kabasakal Arat, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 90.

⁷³² Ann Dismorr, *Turkey Decoded*, (London: Saqi Publication, 2008), 21.

⁷³³ Kansu, *Erzurum’dan Olumune Kadar*, 131.

confirm this assertion, it is known that Ottoman statesmen attempted to change dress in the nineteenth century. It is historically true that headgear had always played an important role in the classical period of the Ottoman Empire. Each social and professional group (viziers, military commanders, Islamic scholars, artisans, different Christian communities, Jews, etc.) had its specified headgear, which helped to identify the social identity of a person in public space. Moreover, wearing of the headgear of a social group not one's own was forbidden. There existed various forms of turbans even for different bureaucratic ranks.⁷³⁴

The fez, a cylindrical red head covering, had been introduced to the Ottoman society as part of his reforms by Sultan Mahmud II after 1826. Ironically it was a Greek Christian fashion, prevalent in the islands and initially derived from the Barbary Corsairs. It was manufactured for the Ottoman market in Austria. Sultan Mahmud II had borrowed the fez from them when he decreed at the beginning of the nineteenth century that the fez be worn, as symbol of Ottoman citizenship, by all the races, religions, and nationalities in the Empire. It became compulsory for all civil servants and military officers to wear as a new official headgear. That headdress became the symbol of the Islamic-Ottoman Empire, even though Ottoman Christians and Jews also wore the fez after 1826.⁷³⁵ Paul Gentizon emphasizes the historical processes before and after Sultan Mahmud II as: "Before the reforms instituted by Sultan Mahmud II in 1830 it was even possible to tell professions by the headgear, and court dignitaries wore turbans whose form and color were minutely prescribed to correspond with their duties. After the massacre of the janissaries, Mahmud decreed that only the holy men should henceforward be authorized to wear a turban, - which,

⁷³⁴ Kalaycioglu, *Turkish Dynamics*, 56. Somel, *Historical Dictionary*, 116.

⁷³⁵ Davison, *The Modern Nations*, 113. Altunisik and Tur, *Turkey*, 21. Kinross, *Ataturk*, 469. Bisbee, *The New Turks*, 22. Somel, *Historical Dictionary*, 116.

however, was simplified, - and that all other Ottoman subjects, soldiers or civilians, should wear the fez.”⁷³⁶ While Gentizon asserts that fez should be worn by civilians, there was not any compulsion for ordinary people in this issue. The Empire made pants, jacket, and fez compulsory clothes and headdress for the military and civilian personnel because of they were seen as the representatives of the Government. On the other hand, the ordinary people were free to wear what kind of headdress they wanted.⁷³⁷

After this reform, the fez was accepted as the headdress for the Ottoman citizens to unite them and to remove differences among citizens. However, this expectation was not realized totally. Paul Gentizon indicates this failure as “... although the headdress prescribed was a kind of national emblem until the revolution of 1908, it nevertheless failed to rally all the Mohammedans of the Empire.” Arabs had their original headdress, keffieh, Kurds had their pointed headdress by the innumerable folds of a monumental turban. The Lazs, the minority in the Black Sea region, had another headdress which was called ‘bashlyk’.”⁷³⁸

During the Second Constitutional Era, which started after the Young Turk Revolution of 1908, the hat became popular among the Christian subjects of the Ottoman Empire.⁷³⁹ The hat was seen as a Christian headdress by the majority of the Ottoman Muslims. Falih Rifki Atay, a staunch Kemalist, told how Muslims categorized their Christian neighbors in his book “Cankaya”. According to Atay, Muslims classified their Christian countrymen into three different groups: the first group was “makul kefer” which signified a good Christian; the second group was “gavur”,

⁷³⁶ Paul Gentizon, “The Headgear of Islam,” *The Living Age*, 19 Sept. 1925, 635.

⁷³⁷ Enver Ziya Karal, *Osmanlı Tarihi [The Ottoman History]*, v. 5, (Ankara: Turk Tarih Kurumu Yayinlari, 1983), 158.

⁷³⁸ Paul Gentizon, “The Headgear of Islam,” *The Living Age*, 19 Sept. 1925, 635.

⁷³⁹ Bisbee, *The New Turks*, 22.

signified a bad Christian; and the last one was “sapkali gavur”, literally means an infidel with hat, which signified the worst Christian.⁷⁴⁰ Therefore, the Muslim Ottomans had a strong belief about hats as a symbol of Christianity. In their mentality, wearing hats was seen as converting to Christianity which was unacceptable for them.

It is historically true that the reform in headdress was started during the Sultanate of Mahmud II. The fez, which was expected to be a kind of national headgear after 1830, slowly gained prevalence among Ottoman society. Especially in urban areas, the fez became the symbol of the Ottomans. The main difference between the Ottoman reform and the Kemalist reform was the compulsion of a modernized headgear for society in a Jacobin way. While the Ottoman reformers preferred a slow change in society without compulsion, the Kemalist modernizers acted differently from their predecessors.

3.1.2 Reasons of Religious and Cultural Objections to a Headdress Reform

The Kemalist reform in the dress code met some objections among the religious people. There were two steps in this reform and both of them got objections from religious circles of the Turkish society. In the first step, the Nationalist Turks tried to accept the kalpak, which had the advantage of being brimless so the worshipper could still bow his covered head in prayer, touching his brow to the ground, as the headdress of the society.⁷⁴¹ The kalpak, which became popular during the Turkish War of Independence among the Kemalist circle, was offered as a national headdress to the society by two pro-Kemalist deputies in the Grand National Assembly.

⁷⁴⁰ Falih Rifki Atay, *Cankaya: Ataturk'un Dogumundan Olumune Kadar [Cankaya: From the Birth of Ataturk until his Death]*, (Istanbul: Pozitif Yayınları, 2004), 468.

⁷⁴¹ Bisbee, *The New Turks*, 22.

On April 29, 1920, just a week after the opening ceremony of the Assembly, the advocates of Westernization tried to remove the fez and accept the kalpak as the national headdress. Emin Bey, pro-Kemalist deputy of Bursa, and Sevkett Bey, another Kemalist deputy of Sinop, introduced a proposal which aimed to change the headdress of the Turkish people to the Grand National Assembly. In their resolution, the deputies mentioned the high cost of importing fezzes from abroad. Beyond this, the deputies did not accept the fez as a national headdress and suggested instead of the fez, the kalpak should be accepted as a headdress for the Turkish people. Even though the kalpak was appropriate for daily prayers, this resolution was rejected fiercely by the conservative deputies. Mustafa Taki Efendi and Hasim Bey stressed the importance of the fez as a distinguishing feature of the Muslim world and especially the Ottomans. According to Mustafa Taki Efendi, removing the fez and accepting the kalpak as a headdress would cause turmoil among Muslims. After these discussions, the resolution was rejected by the majority of the Grand National Assembly.⁷⁴²

In another session Ali Sukru Bey, one of the prominent conservative figures of the Assembly, underlined the untimely discussions about the headdress. He pointed out that, the country was in a time of life and death and the discussions of a national headdress were unnecessary. He also indicated that the Europeans recognized the fez as the national headdress of Turks. Moreover, the Muslims in Far East, like Indian and Javanese Muslims, showed their respect for the fez because they thought that it was the headdress of the Caliph. For these reasons, Ali Sukru Bey believed that the fez was the national headdress of Turks and it was unnecessary to remove it.⁷⁴³ It is clear that the fez was seen as a national headdress and a respectful symbol of the

⁷⁴² *TBMM ZC*, 29 Apr. 1920, v.1, 149- 150.

⁷⁴³ *TBMM ZC*, 4 Apr. 1921, v.9, 351.

Ottomans in the Muslim World. Therefore, the conservative deputies did not want to diminish the reputation of the fez abroad.

The second religious objection to the Kemalist reform in headdress was the inappropriateness of the hat during the prayer. The headgear of a religious Muslim, soldier or civilian, had been visorless, because it had been essential that the believer should be able to touch the earth with his forehead during the ritual prayers. For this reason, Muslims preferred to wear the fez, which was a visorless cap, because of it permitted touching the forehead to the ground in prayer.⁷⁴⁴ While the kalpak was appropriate for this religious duty, the conservatives did not accept it as a national headdress. On the other hand, the European hat had a brim, or visor, and did not permit the wearer to touch his forehead to the ground in the course of his ritual prayers as Muslim custom required, without uncovering his head. To uncover the head, especially when praying, was not done. As a result, religious people did not find the hat a suitable gear during their prayer and showed their objection to this headdress.

The third objection was that possible mimicry of the infidels was seen as a great sin for Muslims. As mentioned above, the traditional Ottoman Muslims had a strong belief about the hat as a symbol of Christianity.⁷⁴⁵ In their mentality, wearing hats was seen as converting to Christianity which was unacceptable for them. Eleanor Bisbee emphasizes this attitude as: “During the century that the fez was the Ottoman headdress, its significance had narrowed as the Empire shrank. It began to signify only Muslims. The Christians in nations which were freed from Ottoman rule first, again wore brimmed hats, except those in Ottoman official circles. Muslim subjects kept

⁷⁴⁴ “New Customs for Young Turks”, *the New York Times*, 19 Sep. 1925, 14. Paul Gentizon, “The Headgear of Islam,” *The Living Age*, 19 Sept. 1925, 634. “Hats Off to Turkey,” *The Independent*, 3 Oct. 1925, 375.

⁷⁴⁵ Barber, *The Sultans*, 281. Orga, *Phoenix Ascendant*, 159.

the fez, and Muslims outside of the Empire wore it too. Thereafter, to the Ottoman subjects, the fez more and more meant the difference between the Muslim and the Christian.”⁷⁴⁶

Some of the religious authorities showed their defiance to the Westernized thoughts in the hat issue by publishing pamphlets to illuminate public opinion. The well-known pamphlet in this subject was “Frenk Mukallitligi ve Sapka” (The Mimicry of the Frankish Hat) which criticized harshly the mimicry of infidels.⁷⁴⁷ The author of the pamphlet was Iskilipli Atif Hoca who considered wearing a hat as sacrilege. The pamphlet was published in July 1924 before the Hat Law passed in the Assembly in November 1925. Atif Hoca was sent to trial and executed in February 1926, because of refusing to obey the Hat Law. This execution was one the extreme cases in this reform.

For these reasons the Muslim majority had a negative attitude towards a possible reform in headdress. They were resisting against the possible change of the national headdress in the early 1920s, but, their resistance was broken by anti-democratic laws in mid-1920s. Before their resistance was broken by the regime, the Kemalist leadership tried to convince people to accept this change.

3.1.3 First Kemalist Initiatives to Convince People of Headdress Reform

The Kemalist Government started to accustom Turkish society to the hat reform by promoting some changes in the military. New military hats which protected soldiers from sunlight were accepted as the new headdress. After these changes, the headdress of policemen, judges,

⁷⁴⁶ Bisbee, *The New Turks*, 22.

⁷⁴⁷ Iskilipli Mehmet Atif Efendi, *Frenk Mukallitligi ve Sapka [The Mimicry of Frankish and Hat]*, (Istanbul: Kader Matbaasi, 1924), 22-23.

court criers, and court clerks were determined.⁷⁴⁸ These changes showed similarities to Ottoman reformation. The Tanzimat Reforms started to change soldiers' dress at the beginning and later officers'.⁷⁴⁹ Finally the reform encompassed the entire society. From this perspective, the Kemalist reform in this subject was a continuation of the Tanzimat reforms. The main difference was the speed of the reforms which became an obstacle for people to approve them easily.

As mentioned above, the traditional and conservative thought towards the hat was negative because of its inappropriateness during prayer. On the other hand, the Kemalists tried to use the official religious and juridical authorities to convince public opinion a change in headdress was appropriate. Firstly, the Chief Justice Omer Lütfi Bey told journalists that there was no relationship between headdress and faith.⁷⁵⁰ *The New York Times* expressed this news as "breaking a tradition" in Turkey. According to the newspaper after this interpretation of the Chief Justice, some changes happened in Turkey. One of the first results in the breach of the old tradition was the appearance for the first time of many Turks in straw hats.⁷⁵¹ While *the New York Times* asserted that there were many Turks were seen in straw hats, there was not a huge interest in straw hats at that time.

3.1.4 Mustafa Kemal as a Role Model during the Headdress Reform

Mustafa Kemal, as an ardent reformer, believed that Turkey should adopt whole-heartedly and unreservedly modern civilization as it existed in elsewhere in the world. Adopting clothing and headgear was a part of this change in his mentality. For realizing this reform, Mustafa Kemal appeared as a role model and made a tour in the northern part of Turkey. He chose Kastamonu, a

⁷⁴⁸ *BCA*, 15 May 1925, Document No: 13.21.9. *BCA*, 9 Jun. 1925, Document no: 14.26.9. *BCA*, 14 Jun. 1925, Folder: 66-12, Document no: 14.38.9. *Cumhuriyet*, 16 Jul. 1925, 1. *Cumhuriyet*, 1 Aug. 1925, 1.

⁷⁴⁹ Chehabi, "Dress Codes for Men in Turkey and Iran," 210-211. Somel, *Historical Dictionary*, 116.

⁷⁵⁰ *Cumhuriyet*, 6 Jun.1925, 1.

⁷⁵¹ "Turks Now Wear Hats, Breaking a Tradition", *the New York Times*, 8 Jun. 1925, 10.

conservative city in the northern of Turkey, to debate the hat issue with people.⁷⁵² He chose a religious town to convert people who thought that wearing hats was a kind of impiety. He went to Kastamonu with a Panama hat on August 23, 1925, and started the reform from the Black Sea region. He walked with his hat among people and tried to accustom them to this reform. He stated that there was no relationship between religion and hats. The goal of Mustafa Kemal and his allies was to change both people's minds and outlook with this reform.⁷⁵³ Mustafa Kemal gave a speech in Kastamonu and clarified his thought about hat reform. According to him, invigorating Old Turkic Turan dress was unnecessary and to accept international dress would be better. He continued his speech as: "I want to say this clearly. The name of this headdress is hat. Some people hesitate on this issue. I call them as ignorant and unwary and ask them why accepting the fez which is a Greek headdress is licit but the hat is not?"⁷⁵⁴ Beyond that Mustafa Kemal warned the people about the necessities of civilization and modernization. He declared that "the nation must know that civilization is a fire so powerful that it burns and annihilates all those who are indifferent to it."⁷⁵⁵

After Kastamonu, Mustafa Kemal visited Inebolu, a port city in the Black Sea region which played a loyal part in the War of Independence, and continued his attack on the fez and the traditional garments still worn in provincial Anatolia. In a series of speeches he ridiculed them as wasteful, uncomfortable, and, above all, barbarous – unworthy of a civilized people. In Inebolu,

⁷⁵² Butler, *Shadow of the Sultan's Realm*, 87. Dismorr, *Turkey Decoded*, 21. D. Vessaz, "The Ghazi on a Tour," *The Living Age*, 31 Oct. 1925, 230-231. Kinross, *Ataturk*, 469.

⁷⁵³ Hasan Riza Soyak, *Ataturk'ten Hatıralar [Memoirs from Ataturk]*, (Istanbul: YKY, 2004), 253-254. Inonu, *İsmet İnönü'nün Hatıraları*, 81-82. Kinross, *Ataturk*, 470. "An Exhortation to Progress," *The Living Age*, 31 Oct. 1925, 232-233.

⁷⁵⁴ Soyak, *Memoirs from Ataturk*, 257-258. Barber, *The Sultans*, 282. Kinzer, *Crescent and Star*, 44.

⁷⁵⁵ Yerasimos, "The Monoparty Period," 85.

Mustafa Kemal elaborated his previous speech in Kastamonu which was related the importance of civilization. He indicated that “I am telling you this as an indisputable truth: Fear not, this oath is imperative, and this obligation leads us towards a lofty and important goal. If you wish, I can tell you that to reach such a lofty and important goal, we shall if necessary suffer casualties. This has no importance.”⁷⁵⁶

This speech was welcomed by the Kemalist press as one of the greatest speeches of the Great Savior- Mustafa Kemal- who showed a new modern path to the nation.⁷⁵⁷ After Mustafa Kemal started to be a role model for this reform, the statesmen followed him immediately. His officials hastened to conform by donning European hats. On his return to Ankara, a group of hatted officials and friends were welcomed Mustafa Kemal on September 1, 1925.⁷⁵⁸ *The Youth's Companion* summarized this situation as: “the President of Turkey not only wears a soft felt hat of the kind that is familiar on Broadway and the Strand, but he has ordered all government officials to do the same.”⁷⁵⁹ From this perspective it can be said that because of this compulsory advice, all of the highest authorities welcomed Mustafa Kemal with their hats. Moreover, although Ismet Inonu thought that Mustafa Kemal's action ended objections from Turkish society,⁷⁶⁰ it is hard to say this idea was true for ordinary people. They showed their dissatisfactions after the Hat Law forced them to wear hats. After Mustafa Kemal's tour in the north part of Turkey and his encouragement of the new headdress for Turkish people, the Government accepted a group of new decrees directed against the theocracy included a ban on the wearing of religious vestments or

⁷⁵⁶ Kinross, *Ataturk*, 470. Lewis, *The Emergence*, 263. Yerasimos, “*The Monoparty Period*,” 85.

⁷⁵⁷ *Cumhuriyet*, 29 Aug. 1925, 1. “Turks Obey Kemal on Hats,” *the New York Times*, 31 Aug. 1925, 17.

⁷⁵⁸ Davison, *The Modern Nations*, 131. Kinross, *Ataturk*, 472.

⁷⁵⁹ “Off with the Fez, on with the Hat,” *The Youth's Companion*, 29 Oct. 1925, 763.

⁷⁶⁰ Soyak, *Memoirs from Ataturk*, 259. Inonu, *Ismet Inonu'nun Hatiralari*, 81-82.

insignia by persons not holding a recognized religious office, and an order to all civil servants to wear Western suits and hats.⁷⁶¹

The Turkish press, which can be called Kemalist press after the Law on the Maintenance of Order, was eager to support the new reform. Yunus Nadi Bey, deputy of Mugla and the owner of newspaper *Cumhuriyet*, proved this eagerness. In an article in *Cumhuriyet*, Yunus Nadi Bey expressed his thoughts as: “however much we strive to escape from the ties of past, we could not manage it. We suppose that if we break our ties with past, we would fell down. However it is not true, the past was decayed for a long time.” After this comment Yunus Nadi exalted Mustafa Kemal as a farsighted man who saw this decay and showed people that the past was dead. Moreover, Yunus Nadi pointed out that the peasants welcomed Gazi bareheaded and applauded him. These attitudes were interpreted as the correctness of Mustafa Kemal in this reform.⁷⁶²

Akbaba described the general attitude of people in the first days of this reform. In its columns *Akbaba* summarized the gloomy atmosphere of fez vendors who were thinking about their future. On the other hand some of the shrewd vendors started to sell imitations of Panama hats or homburgs. The author observed that there was a flood of hats after the evening break in the government agencies. According to the author, people, except tactless and rude ones, were waiting a sign to wear hats. After today, the old fezzes could be used only for floriculture.⁷⁶³ The Kemalist press tried to convince people that hats were widely accepted after Mustafa Kemal became a role model in this reform. *Cumhuriyet* mentioned that hats became popular among women also.⁷⁶⁴

⁷⁶¹ Lewis, *The Emergence*, 264.

⁷⁶² Yunus Nadi, “Sapka” [The Hat], *Cumhuriyet*, 1 Sep. 1925, 1.

⁷⁶³ *Akbaba*, 3 Sep. 1925, 1.

⁷⁶⁴ *Cumhuriyet*, 5 Sep. 1925, 1.

On the other hand, many problems occurred in the first days of this reform. One of them was the lack of infrastructure for this reform. While Mustafa Kemal started his campaign against fez and kalpak and in favor of modern hat as a symbol of civilization, hat profiteers appeared in Turkey. Hat manufacturers demanded high prices for hats, and this caused many difficulties for people. Later the Government intervened in this situation to stop profiteering.⁷⁶⁵ The Prefect of Istanbul set a limit to the hat dealers' profit, 15% on ordinary hats and 25% on fancy ones.⁷⁶⁶

There were no Turkish factories to manufacture hats at that time and this was another obstacle to ordinary people obtain a hat easily. The Government imported hats in bulk "by every ship and every train" to meet the demand which occurred after Mustafa Kemal's decree against the fez.⁷⁶⁷ *Cumhuriyet* called for the establishment of hat factories immediately to solve the economic difficulties.⁷⁶⁸

Another problem was the economic hardship of the officials who had to be forced to get a hat. For resolving this problem, the Government issued advance payments to the entire officials. Those payments would cut from their salaries in future.⁷⁶⁹ These news in the Kemalist press were proofs of how the basis of this reform was immature. The government did not prepare the infrastructure of this reform.

Mustafa Kemal continued his visits to different parts of Turkey to spread the reform. On September 23, 1925, he gave a speech in Bursa. In his speech he pointed out that in the near future

⁷⁶⁵ *Cumhuriyet*, 2 Sep. 1925, 1. *Aksam*, 3 Sep. 1925, 1.

⁷⁶⁶ "Turks Rush to Buy Hats; Curb Applied to Profiteers", *the New York Times*, 18 Sep. 1925, 1.

⁷⁶⁷ "Not a Fez to be Seen in Constantinople", *the New York Times*, 8 Jan. 1926, 4.

⁷⁶⁸ *Cumhuriyet*, 4 Sep. 1925, 1. *Cumhuriyet*, 7 Sep. 1925, 1.

⁷⁶⁹ *BCA*, 20 Sep. 1925, Folder: 14-32, Document no: 15.61.2.

the dervishes, disciples, and hodjas would be satisfied the hat as a civilized headdress.⁷⁷⁰ In another speech in Akhisar, Mustafa Kemal identified the hat as one of the characteristics of Western civilization. He underlined that the debate about wearing hats or not was unnecessary. Turkish society would wear hats and accept all the civilized products of Western civilization.⁷⁷¹ *Journal de Genève* covered the visits of Mustafa Kemal around the country. According to the newspaper, while Turks thought that the hat was a symbol of infidels, and a contemptible headdress, the Turkish Government launched an attack to the fez which used to wear as a national headdress in the past. The newspaper described the demonstrations in Bursa against the fez, too.⁷⁷²

The columns of *Cumhuriyet* covered Mustafa Kemal's visit to Bursa. On September 28, 1925, *Cumhuriyet* declared that "people will organize an enormous cheer in front of the Kiosk of Mustafa Kemal today, people who did not find a hat will tour bareheaded, and the fezzes will be torn immediately."⁷⁷³ This suggests local administration organized these kinds of meetings to show how people were eager for the reform. It is doubtful the participation of people took place without government compulsion. After these visits, school teachers and students were forced to wear hats by the Government's general instruction.⁷⁷⁴

While the early stage of reform at the beginning of September 1925 was described as an enthusiastic reception of the reform started by Mustafa Kemal, the Kemalist press was obliged to confess that people were not so eager for this reform at the end of October 1925. In *Cumhuriyet*, Yunus Nadi conceded that people who came from Asia Minor to Istanbul were surprised that so

⁷⁷⁰ *Vakit*, 23 Sep. 1925, 1.

⁷⁷¹ *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, 12 Oct. 1925, 1.

⁷⁷² *Journal de Genève*, 1 Oct. 1925, 2.

⁷⁷³ *Cumhuriyet*, 28 Sep. 1925, 1.

⁷⁷⁴ *Aksam*, 4 Oct. 1925, 1.

many people still wore fezzes in Istanbul. While the Anatolian people – mostly peasants- followed the path of Mustafa Kemal in this reform, Istanbul was resistant. Yunus Nadi tried to convince his readers that intellectuals in Istanbul followed the Great Savoir immediately, but there were in fact still many people wore fezzes.⁷⁷⁵ Yunus Nadi was correct about the passive resistance of people in Istanbul. However he was mistaken by the attitude of the people in Asia Minor. Anatolian Turks showed their dissatisfaction after the Hat Law of 1925 passed in the Assembly on November 25, 1925.

A news in *the New York Times* on October 30, 1925, described the same reluctance of people to wear hats in Istanbul. However, the solution of the Government for this problem revealed the confusion of the Kemalist Government which was certain of people's willingness to wear modern hats. *The New York Times* described the situation in Istanbul as: "the celebration of the proclamation of the Turkish Republic was made notable by the almost complete absence of fezzes and kalpaks on the streets. Until yesterday Constantinople had not adopted European headgear with any particular fervor, but yesterday morning it was learned that the authorities had been told to make the wearing of hats and caps compulsory. Warnings to this effect were given to passersby by the police and in the house-to-house visits of night watchmen." As a result of this pressure to people, the newspaper mentioned that there were raids on the shops selling anything that looked like a hat. These hats were a fair imitation of European fashions and the newspaper found their types so ludicrously unsuitable.⁷⁷⁶

⁷⁷⁵ Yunus Nadi, "İstanbul ve Sapka" [Istanbul and the Hat], *Cumhuriyet*, 25 Oct. 1925, 1.

⁷⁷⁶ "Constantinople Drops Fez", *the New York Times*, 30 Oct. 1925, 2.

3.1.5 The Hat Law of 1925

After Mustafa Kemal's visits to different parts of the country, government bureaucrats, officers, and intellectuals started to wear hats, but the majority of people in Turkey did not accept this situation. In November 1925, the Assembly passed a law requiring men to wear hats and outlawing the wearing of the fez.⁷⁷⁷ On November 16, 1925, Refik Bey, pro-Kemalist deputy of Konya, and his colleagues presented a resolution to the Grand National Assembly.⁷⁷⁸ The resolution was debated in the Assembly on November 25, 1925. During the discussions in the Assembly, the Kemalist majority emphasized the importance of this reform to remove the distinction between Turks and other modern states in the headdress. According to the Kemalist deputies, the Turkish nation decided to follow the civilized nations and accept the hat as a symbol of this process. Moreover, as a Kemalist exaggeration, they claimed Turkish people accepted hats and became a good example. However, the reality was totally different than this Kemalist assertion. After accepting this law, the ordinary people were forced to wear European hats.

The resolution of Refik Bey was debated in the Assembly on November 25, 1925. In the resolution, Refik Bey explained the reasons for accepting the hat as a national headdress. According to him, the headdress issue had a particular importance for Turkey which aimed to enter the civilized world. The fez was a distinction between Turks and the rest of modern states; therefore the fez should be replaced with the hat. Refik Bey pointed out that Turkish people accepted hats and became a good example for officers. The first article of the Law was quite interesting. In this article, members of the Parliament and the officers would have to wear hats

⁷⁷⁷ Howard, *History of Turkey*, 96-97. Dismorr, *Turkey Decoded*, 21. Kinross, *Ataturk*, 473.

⁷⁷⁸ *TBMM ZC*, 16 Nov. 1925, v.19, 125.

accepted and worn by Turkish people.⁷⁷⁹ According to this law, the Turkish people accepted hats, and after that day it should be compulsory for every officer and Member of Parliament. This law was one of the great contradictions of the Kemalist regime. The majority of Turkish people did not accept hats before that day, but this law made it compulsory for everyone. This pressure from top to bottom caused many protests against the Kemalist Government.

The Hat Law was discussed and passed in the Grand National Assembly on November 25, 1925. The Kemalist majority in the Assembly did not allow free speech to opponents during discussions of this law. Nureddin Pasha, deputy from Bursa, was the only opponent to this law and offered a resolution to the Assembly not to accept this law which contradicted the Constitution. According to Nureddin Pasha, the bill would cause damages, restricting people's free will and freedom of speech.⁷⁸⁰

The resolution of Nureddin Pasha caused great tension among Kemalist deputies. Firstly Refik Bey argued the Turkish nation showed a great desire to wear hats and this was a great step in Turkish history. The Turkish nation aimed to accept the entire values of the modern and civilized nations. Therefore, Turkish people accepted the hat as their headdress like the rest of the modern World. After summarizing the general attitude of the Turkish people, Refik Bey attacked the resolution of Nureddin Pasha. He blamed Nureddin Pasha for not understanding and representing his voters. According to Refik Bey, the polling district of Nureddin Pasha did not agree with him and all of them would be angry with his resolution. Moreover, Refik Bey stated that the nation accepted hats without any preaching and after today nobody could touch it.⁷⁸¹

⁷⁷⁹ *TBMM ZC*, 25 Nov. 1925, v.19, 221.

⁷⁸⁰ *TBMM ZC*, 25 Nov. 1925, v.19, 222.

⁷⁸¹ *TBMM ZC*, 25 Nov. 1925, v.19, 223.

After Refik Bey, Minister of Justice Mahmut Esat Bey laid out his thoughts about the Hat Law. He rejected the claim of Nureddin Pasa that this Law was against the Constitution. Mahmut Esat Bey rejected the restriction of freedom of the Turkish people with this law but added there was no limit for the freedom. According to him, the freedom could be limited with the great benefits of the Turkish nation. The Minister believed that the highest authority would be the interest of Turkish nation and nobody could violate this principle even through the legal process. The Turkish nation decided to follow the civilized nations and accepting the hat as a headdress was a symbol of this process. Mahmut Esat Bey warned Nureddin Pasha against violating the notion of freedom. From his perspective, this freedom would be a toy which was played by reactionaries, and the Government would not allow this possibility.⁷⁸²

Agaoglu Ahmet Bey, deputy of Kars, joined to the discussion on the Kemalist side. He did not understand the relation between the hat and the Constitution in the resolution of Nureddin Pasha. Instead of looking at Nureddin Pasha's concerns about people's freedom, Agaoglu Ahmet Bey used a very strange argument. According to him, accepting the Hat Law meant accepting the Constitution because the source of the Constitution and Hat Law was same: the civilized nations. Agaoglu Ahmet Bey was one of the prominent figures of the Republican People's Party at that time and his approach to this Law represented the radical wing of the Party. In their perspective, accepting all forms of the Western Civilization was necessary. Moreover, Agaoglu Ahmet Bey concluded his speech that if there were a thought among Turkish people that the Hat Law contradicted the constitution; he would then be convinced that the Constitution was not established in Turkey. When people were totally free to change their dresses and headdresses, it could be said

⁷⁸² *TBMM ZC*, 25 Nov. 1925, v.19, 223-224.

that the Constitution existed in Turkey.⁷⁸³ The problem with his approach was that the Turkish people were not ready to accept this reform willingly at that time. People who did not want to change their headdresses by their free will to were subject to prosecution.

After Agaoglu Ahmet Bey, Ilyas Sami Bey came to the podium and attacked the resolution of Nureddin Pasa. Ilyas Sami Bey was a good example to prove that how Kemalist deputies attacked the opposition to silence them within the Assembly. Ilyas Sami Bey reminded Nureddin Pasha of the notion of revolution which was a flood removing all obstacles on its way. After reminding him of the meaning of revolution, Ilyas Sami Bey thought that Nureddin Pasha should not give the resolution to the Assembly and not mention it in the Assembly.⁷⁸⁴ This is a small example, but it illustrates how it was difficult to criticize any Kemalist reform in the Assembly. When a dissident deputy had many difficulties in showing his rejections of any reform, rejecting a law would be impossible for the ordinary people.

Rasih Effendi, deputy of Antalya, brought up foreign propaganda against the Turkish Government over religious issues. These propagandas, which suggested that Turks changed their religion, were very effective within the state. Rasih Effendi suggested talking about this issue in the scientific area. He wanted to research this law to see if it was against the religion or not. From his perspective, wearing hats was not against religion because wearing pants, shirts, and ties could be thought in that way. According to Rasih Bey, wearing hats would not make people Christian which was the main concern of the Turkish people at that time.⁷⁸⁵

⁷⁸³ *TBMM ZC*, 25 Nov. 1925, v.19, 224-225.

⁷⁸⁴ *TBMM ZC*, 25 Nov. 1925, v.19, 226.

⁷⁸⁵ *TBMM ZC*, 25 Nov. 1925, v.19, 226-227.

While Rasih Effendi mentioned about the religious concerns was unnecessary, the boldest attack on Islam came from Sukru Kaya, deputy of Mentese. In his speech in the Assembly, Sukru Kaya Bey examined the subject in three aspects. The first aspect was religious, which should be discussed in mosques, not in the Grand National Assembly. According to Sukru Kaya Bey, the material issues and interests of Turkish nation should be discussed in the Assembly. He underlined that the Turkish nation would not connect its destiny to the obsolete thoughts of sixth and seventh centuries, the Era of Prophet Mohammad. The Turkish nation emancipated itself from all of the ties of the past. In the second aspect, Sukru Kaya mentioned national dress. According to him, national dress could be seen in the museums or history. All civilized nations had the same attire. It was impossible to differentiate a German from a British or a Frenchman because of their similar outer appearance. However, each of them had different national feelings. Therefore, the aim of the Republican Government would be to grow up the next generation with this mentality. In the third aspect, Sukru Kaya Bey did not think that the law was a contradiction to the Constitution. After these explanations, Sukru Kaya Bey criticized the resolution of Nureddin Pasha, which he said should be not read in the Assembly.⁷⁸⁶ Sukru Kaya Bey showed how the radical wing in the Kemalist party was effective through his speech in the Assembly.

Nurettin Pasha was not only criticized in the Assembly but also in the Kemalist press. The newspaper *Cumhuriyet* screamed: “What is the duty of a political reactionary pasha in the National Assembly?” According to the newspaper, Nureddin Pasha was advocating the fez instead of the hat, bigotry instead of rationalization, political reaction instead of revolution; therefore, there was no place for Nureddin Pasha in the Turkish Revolutionary Assembly.⁷⁸⁷ Yunus Nadi supported the

⁷⁸⁶ TBMM ZC, 25 Nov. 1925, v.19, 227.

⁷⁸⁷ *Cumhuriyet*, 2 Dec. 1925, 1.

attitude of the Kemalist deputies toward Nureddin Pasha. According to him, Nureddin Pasha was torn apart by Kemalist criticism and he slipped away from the Assembly.⁷⁸⁸ *Aksam* denounced Nureddin Pasha as a reactionary. According to the newspaper, people appealed to the People's Party to dismiss Nureddin Pasha and his allies from the Party.⁷⁸⁹ Not only the national press attacked Nureddin Pasha but also the local press. *Golge*, one of the newspapers published in Adana, blamed Nureddin Pasha for encouraging traitors and ignorant people who disliked modernization.⁷⁹⁰ These examples demonstrate that any objection to the reforms suffered great pressure from the Assembly and the Kemalist press at the same time.

The Kemalist assertion about Turkish people was following Mustafa Kemal in the hat reform became a delusion because of serious protests to the law organized by common people. These demonstrations will be covered in the next section.

3.1.6 Implementation of the Hat Law and Protests against the Reform

When the Kemalist Government passed the Hat Law, claimed to be embraced by the Turkish people widely, in the Assembly, the protests against to the Government's enforcement and the way the regime pushed far ahead of public opinion revealed the Kemalist contradictions on this subject. When the Hat Law was implemented by the Kemalist Government in November 1925, there were many difficulties which affected the lives of ordinary people. The lack of hats for the ordinary people was a great problem at the early stage of the reform.⁷⁹¹ Eleanor Bisbee describes this situation as: "the order was appalling to carry out. After a specified date no man was to appear

⁷⁸⁸ Yunus Nadi, "Hakli bir Infial" [A Rightful Anger], *Cumhuriyet*, 2 Dec. 1925, 1.

⁷⁸⁹ *Aksam*, 3 Dec. 1925, 1.

⁷⁹⁰ Mehmed Rasim, "Alaka Herkese Lazimdir" [To Show Interest is Necessary for everybody], *Golge*, 26 Dec. 1925, 1.

⁷⁹¹ Kinross, *Ataturk*, 472.

in public unless in a brimmed hat. There weren't that many hats in the whole country. Merchants in Christian countries rushed outmoded hats from their dustiest shelves to Turkey. In the meantime, laughable or not, a man who had to appear in public bought or borrowed any style of hat or cap, sometimes even a woman's hat with a brim."⁷⁹² Noel Barber also mentions about the police enforcement towards to the ordinary people as:

Old people tied handkerchiefs on their heads before putting hats on top, until the police tore the handkerchiefs off. Peasants in Anatolia who had never seen a hat wore ancient discarded bowlers or straw hats or cloth caps from Russia. In Smyrna a farmer found a deserted Greek shop filled with women's beribboned hats left behind during the panic of the exodus. He sold them in his village but not to the women. All the male villagers wore ladies' summer hats on their way to market, even when working in the fields.⁷⁹³

Irfan Orga emphasizes how the ordinary people tried to escape from wearing hats, seeing them as a strike to their beliefs:

The people were apathetic, but defied the wearing of hats, their pious superstitions lending them the strength of subterfuge. Old men tied handkerchiefs over their heads and then, forced by the police to don the Christian hat, set it upright on the handkerchief, thus saving their consciences, for at least the hat itself did not make contact with their flesh. But the police, alert to such tricks, tore off the handkerchiefs and clamped the hat squarely and securely on the naked head and the peasants, horror struck, waited for God to strike them dead. The abolition of the fez struck at the very heart of belief.⁷⁹⁴

Following the adoption by the assembly of the law mandating the wearing of hats, on November 25, 1925, a series of explosions occurred in various places in Anatolia. The first serious protest was organized in Erzurum, one of the biggest cities in the eastern Turkey.⁷⁹⁵ The Kemalist press described this event as "the black force," that is reaction, was not sleeping. According to the

⁷⁹² Bisbee, *The New Turks*, 23.

⁷⁹³ Barber, *The Sultans*, 282.

⁷⁹⁴ Orga, *Phoenix Ascendant*, 162.

⁷⁹⁵ Yerasimos, "The Monoparty Period," 85. Dismorr, *Turkey Decoded*, 21. Kinross, *Ataturk*, 473. Orga, *Phoenix Ascendant*, 162.

newspaper *Aksam*, in Erzurum, reactionaries wanted to organize a rally against modernization, but the Government suppressed this rally and arrested the organizers.⁷⁹⁶ Yunus Nadi Bey interpreted this event in *Cumhuriyet*. According to him, this protest was organized by people whose souls were bound to rotten things of the past. They did not like modernization and they could not understand what these efforts were. As a Member of Parliament and a close friend of Mustafa Kemal, Yunus Nadi was aware of how most of Turkish people were against these new efforts and they was not surprised by the people's attitudes. Yunus Nadi compared the Turkish revolution with the French Revolution and said that even though the French Revolution (which lasted longer than the Turkish Revolution) did not manage to remove all loyalists, it was normal that there were many people who were not in favor of the Turkish Revolution, which had begun less than 15 years ago. The Republican regime would suppress these demonstrations severely to continue its existence. Yunus Nadi warned the opponents that the Republican regime was not afraid of these "nitwit people" who disliked it, because the Republic did not belong to hadjis, hodjas, usurpers, and feudal lords; the Republic belonged to the Turkish nation.⁷⁹⁷ The Erzurum incident was suppressed by executing six people and imprisoning at least eighty people.⁷⁹⁸ *The New York Times* described the same incident as: "old fashioned Turks who do not want to be westernized are fighting, and even dying, for their fezzes, which the Government has ordered to be replaced by modern hats. Reports reaching Angora tell of a riot directed against the Occidental reforms in one of the eastern

⁷⁹⁶ *Aksam*, 26 Nov. 1925, 1. *Cumhuriyet*, 26 Nov. 1925, 1.

⁷⁹⁷ Yunus Nadi, "Erzurum Hadisesi" [The Erzurum Incident], *Cumhuriyet*, 26 Nov. 1925, 1.

⁷⁹⁸ *Aksam*, 1 Dec. 1925, 1.

provinces.”⁷⁹⁹ *Journal de Genève* announced the Erzurum incident to its readers also. In its news, there were 8 people were executed because of their refusal to wear hats.⁸⁰⁰

The next day, *Aksam* warned people that: “because of passing the Hat Law in the Assembly, people in Erzurum, Sivas and the rest of Turkey have to wear hats.”⁸⁰¹ However, when the Law was discussed in the Assembly, the Kemalist deputies asserted that the hat was accepted widely by the Turkish people and they wanted to make a law because of the people’s demands. This is one of the major paradox in this reform.

The Erzurum incident was followed by the Rize incident on November 28, 1925.⁸⁰² Some of the local imams condemned the Government as accepting the infidels’ headdress. This situation caused a protest against the Government. The Government sent the Independence Tribunal to suppress the demonstration. Finally, eight people were executed by the Independence Tribunal.⁸⁰³ The next day, another protest occurred in Maras, a southern Turkish city. People gathered in front of the government office and shouted “we don’t want hats.”⁸⁰⁴ The incident was suppressed by imprisoning forty people.⁸⁰⁵ Another incident occurred in Giresun, in north-eastern Turkey. In this protest, sixty people were imprisoned.⁸⁰⁶ According to *the New York Times*, “two devout Mohammedans” who refused to abandon their fezzes were condemned to death by hanging.⁸⁰⁷

⁷⁹⁹ “Hang for Anti-Fez Talk,” *the New York Times*, 3 Dec. 1925, 3.

⁸⁰⁰ *Journal de Genève*, 25 Dec. 1925, 3.

⁸⁰¹ *Aksam*, 27 Nov. 1925, 1.

⁸⁰² *Cumhuriyet*, 29 Nov. 1925, 1. Orga, *Phoenix Ascendant*, 162.

⁸⁰³ Mahmut Gologlu, *Devrimler ve Tepkileri 1924-1930 [Revolutions and Reactions 1924-1930]*, (Ankara: Basnur Matbaasi, 1972), 156-157.

⁸⁰⁴ “Hang for Anti-Fez Talk,” *the New York Times*, 3 Dec. 1925, 3.

⁸⁰⁵ *Cumhuriyet*, 30 Nov. 1925, 1.

⁸⁰⁶ *Aksam*, 18 Dec. 1925, 1.

⁸⁰⁷ “Death Penalty for Wearing Fez,” *the New York Times*, 22 Dec. 1925, 3.

People in Istanbul were anxious about the Government's decision also. The district of Fatih was the center of protesting the Hat Law in Istanbul and police arrested many opponents because of their dissatisfaction with the Law.⁸⁰⁸ Prime Minister Ismet Pasha talked about these protests in the Assembly. According to him, all of these demonstrations were organized by traitors who posed as hodjas, religious commissars. They were controlled by a center within the state but had some connections abroad.⁸⁰⁹ Accusing foreigners of agitating people at home was a state tradition in Turkey. Ismet Pasa also continued the same tradition by accusing some centers of organizing the protests from abroad.

While the Kemalist regime called itself secular, not intervening in the faiths of people, this was not true. The Government directly intervened in religious practices, contradicting its secular character. As an example, the Kemalist regime published a circular letter which tried to convince people there would be no religious problem if they prayed with their hats.⁸¹⁰ The circular letter did not attract enough attention and finally the Government sent another ultimatum to religious institutions to provide uniformity by wearing hats by the congregation during the religious services.⁸¹¹ While people were forced to wear hats even in the mosques during prayers, the Kemalist press celebrated religious leaders who accepted wearing hats. The mufti of Ayvalik was praised by the newspaper *Cumhuriyet* and hailed as a modern mufti. While the mufti was an insignificant man, *Cumhuriyet* interpreted this event as the reform was accepted by local religious

⁸⁰⁸ *Cumhuriyet*, 8 Dec. 1925, 1.

⁸⁰⁹ *TBMM ZC*, 12 Dec. 1925, v.20, 109-110.

⁸¹⁰ *BCA*, 5 Jan. 1926, Document no: 2.13.23.

⁸¹¹ *BCA*, 14 Jan. 1926, Document no: 13.115.5.

people and as proof of how the reform spread from intellectual centers to local places in Anatolia.⁸¹²

After the implementation of the hat law in Turkey, the results of the reform were observed by foreign correspondents. Their observations gave more details about phases of the reform in Turkish society. In May 1926, John H. Finley described his visit to Turkey and the effects of the hat reform in *the New York Times*. Finley pointed out that he was in Ankara in 1923, when Ismet Pasha returned from Lausanne after the draft of the treaty was signed by the representatives of the Western powers and Turkey. In that great crowd waiting for Ismet Pasha, Finley indicated that he was the only person who wore a hat. However, this time, he visited two major Turkish cities, Istanbul and Ankara, and saw only one person who wore a fez. According to Finley, this religious man presumably had an official license to wear a fez. Finley emphasized that the enforcement of prohibition in the matter of headdress was completely effective. From this perspective, he showed that the Kemalist regime achieved the implementation of this reform by the help of this law. Another point in this article was the future of this reform. According to Finley, the fez would be only a memory and the change in headgear would be a symbol of Turkey's irreparable break with her past.⁸¹³

In November 1927, Harry A. Franck visited Istanbul and he relayed his observations in *the New York Times*. Like Finley, Franck noted the complete abolition of the fez in Istanbul. He indicated that the fez "was as completely disappeared as dinosaur" from Istanbul. Moreover, Franck described the situation in Anatolia. According to him, "after two years of practice, something like six Turks out of ten in the Asiatic and less sophisticated part of their contracted

⁸¹² *Cumhuriyet*, 2 Mar. 1926, 1.

⁸¹³ John H. Finley, "New Turkey Looks to American Aid," *the New York Times*, 23 May 1926, E1.

country will be found with the visor of a cap.” This testimony shows that at least 40% of Anatolian people did not wear any European cap, even though Franck interpreted this reform as an “insignificant subject of the overnight change, by dictatorial decree.” Beyond this lack of interest of the Anatolian peasantry in the reform, Franck mentioned about another crisis of the reform: the deficit of modern European hats in Turkey. He gave some details about the early phase of the reform as: “in the early days of the new order there was what ‘the educated Constantinopolite calls in his second language a *crise de chapeaux*.’ Such stocks as were on hand disappeared like the first snow on a heated sidewalk. Almost any substitute for Western headgear was acceptable. In the interior, away from European-familiar Constantinople, women’s hats in the whole gamut of styles of the past decade sallied boldly forth on male heads.”⁸¹⁴ This is another tragic result of the reform. The Anatolian people were not aware of what they wore. To save their lives, they wore absurd women’s hats.

In Bursa, there were 114 package containing fezzes captured by the government in 1930. This situation agitated the official circles as the reactionary elements were still active in Turkey. J. W. Collins reported that the authorities would deal severely with persons engaged in the illegal fez trade, and it was possible that they would be hanged. Not only people who lived in the western Turkey were against the European headdress but also the eastern provinces. Collins described that “Kurds preferred to go bareheaded rather than adopt the European form of headdress, which was utterly foreign and distasteful to them.” Moreover, some Turkish people persisted in wearing their fezzes underneath their hats or caps.⁸¹⁵ This testimony also shows passive resistance to the

⁸¹⁴ Harry A. Franck, “Her Fez Gone, Turkey Closes an Era,” *the New York Times*, 13 Nov. 1927, SM10.

⁸¹⁵ J.W. Collins, “New Party and Fez Are Turkish Topics,” *the New York Times*, 5 Oct. 1930, E8.

Kemalist reform continuing among the ordinary people through 1930. While this resistance was a fact, Collins believed that there was a very little chance to undo this reform.

On January 4, 1931, Clair Price was also described the same incident in Bursa. She expressed her thoughts about the fez as: “the Turkish fez dies hard. Although it has now been officially dead for more than five years, it still continues to bob up from its grave and to shake a grieved tassel at the hats and caps of the republic before being hurriedly thrust underground again.”⁸¹⁶ Moreover, Price described the attitudes of the believers during their religious duties in mosques. She indicated that the “uncovered believers may at times take from their pockets the traditional headwear of their faith and don it as they kneel toward Mecca.”⁸¹⁷ These observations show that while the Government forced people to wear European hats, there was passive resistance to the Government’s decree among the ordinary people in Anatolia.

In conclusion, the modernization was seen as a necessity in formal alterations such as changing people’s outer appearances or cleaning and organizing streets etc. by Ottoman Young Turks and later Kemalists. Kemalists inherited the ideology of changing people’s outer appearances from their predecessors. Therefore, there was continuity in this reform mentality between the Ottoman reformers and Kemalists. However, the Kemalist discourse claims that Mustafa Kemal had the most original ideas during his reformation. This is one of the Kemalist misinterpretation in the social and penal reforms during the Kemalist era. As a staunch Kemalist, Falih Rifki thought that the Hat Law was a distinction of the Kemalist reform rather than the Young Turks reforms because of its permanent character.⁸¹⁸ However, he did not mention about the

⁸¹⁶ Clair Price, “Old Turkey’s Badge, the Fez, Dies Hard,” *the New York Times*, 4 Jan. 1931, SM7.

⁸¹⁷ Price, *A History of Turkey*, 19.

⁸¹⁸ Atay, *Cankaya*, 430-431.

importance and usage of the extraordinary laws, such as Law on the Maintenance Order in 1925, for implementing reforms in Turkey.

Another Kemalist false claim in this subject was the claim of popular demand to change their traditional headgear. While the Kemalist orthodoxy asserts that the Kemalist regime accepted the Hat Law of 1925 as a demand of people, historical records prove that Turkish people resisted this reform by protesting the Government. The result of these demonstrations was the suppression of people's freedom not to wear hats. People's dissatisfactions were labeled as a reactionary movement and the Kemalist regime had a basis to suppress these rebels. Forcing people to wear hats was not only threatening to ordinary men in Turkey, but many deputies and officers also had concerns about this law. Ismet Inonu recalled his close friends in the party voicing their concerns about this law. One of the deputies, Hacı Bedir Aga, warned him about this law as people were thinking that the Ankara Government became infidel by accepting this law. However, when the law was passed in the Assembly, Hacı Bedir Aga wore a hat as one of the vanguards of this law.⁸¹⁹ However, Ismet Pasa did not mention about the compulsion of this law which was not easy to defy it.

3.2 Closing down the Dervish Lodges

One of the most significant social changes in Turkey during the Kemalist modernization was closing down the “tekke ve zaviye” (dervish lodges) which had been deeply rooted in Ottoman society for centuries. The dervish lodge, one of the most important institutions in Islamic culture, was a place where Sufi mystics, ideas, and practices were introduced to people. People went to these lodges to cure and rest their souls which were tired because of worldly fatigue and trouble. These institutions were also places for people to spend their leisure time. Moreover, the dervishes

⁸¹⁹ Inonu, *Ismet Inonu'nun Hatıraları*, 83.

prayed and made invocations in these places.⁸²⁰ Beyond their religious function, many dervish lodges also fulfilled social and cultural functions. Some dervish convents served as hospices for strangers, while other were in a sense schools for the fine arts, where calligraphy, poetry, and music were taught and performances constituted a part of the mystical exercises. Some dervish lodges served as leprosaria, while others were the meeting places of guild members.⁸²¹ Therefore, these institutions were very active during the rise of the Ottoman Empire and they played a very significant role in Islamizing Asia Minor.⁸²² However, some of them deteriorated like other governmental institutions at the end of the Ottoman Empire.⁸²³ The Westernized Ottoman intellectuals wanted to reform these deteriorated lodges but they could not manage it. Semseddin Gunaltay, the Prime Minister of Turkish Republic in 1949, thought that the negative effects of the dervish lodges were a reason of the decay of the Ottoman Empire. From his perspective, once upon a time the dervish lodges were the core of the Ottoman rise, but when the Empire lost its power against its enemies, the dervish lodges could not fulfill their duties in this period.⁸²⁴

When the Kemalist regime consolidated its power after the extraordinary law in March 1925, it started to show its aversion to religious institutions outside of its control. Even though, some of the dervish lodges degenerated, most of them were useful during the Turkish War of Independence War between 1919 and 1922. In general the brotherhoods seem to have rallied to

⁸²⁰ Mustafa Kara, *Tekkeler ve Zaviyeler [The Dervish Lodges]*, (Istanbul: Dergah Yayinlari, 1977), 120-128.

⁸²¹ Somel, *Historical Dictionary*, 74.

⁸²² Mustafa Akdag, *Turkiye'nin Iktisadi ve Ictimai Tarihi [The Economic and Social History of Turkey]*, (Istanbul: Yapi Kredi Yayinlari, 2010), 38.

⁸²³ Bayram Ali Cetinkaya, *Turkiye'nin Modernlesme Surecinde Semseddin Gunaltay [Semseddin Gunaltay during the Modernization of Turkey]*, (Ankara: Arastirma Yayinlari, 2003), 61.

⁸²⁴ Mehmed Semseddin Gunaltay, *Zulmetten Nura: Bunalinim Cagindan Islamin Aydinligina [From Darkness to the Light: From the Era of Depression to the Illumination of Islam]*, (Istanbul: Marifet Yayinlari, 1998), 192-193.

the support of the nationalists in Anatolia. The first Grand National Assembly included ten of their leading sheikhs, drawn from the Mevlevi, Bektasi, and even the Nakshibendi order. Ozbekler Tekkesi in Uskudar district of Istanbul, Hatuniye Dergahi, Taceddin Dergahi were the main dervish lodges which supported the National forces during the war.⁸²⁵ Moreover, Mustafa Kemal got personal support from both the Chief of the Dervishes, the Mevlevi lodges, in Anatolia⁸²⁶ and Hacı Fevzi Efendi, the Sheik of the Nakshibendi dervish sect.⁸²⁷ Like the rest of the religious institution, the dervish lodges were seen as a threat to the newly secular state and they were banned. The religious authorities were controlled by the Directorate of the Religious Affairs, established in March 1924. The Kemalist regime controlled and domesticated religion by using this Directorate while it asserted that the regime had a secular mentality.

In 1925, after the law passed in the Grand National Assembly, “the tarikats,” the religious orders, which formed the backbone of folk Islam in rural Anatolia, and dervish lodges were banned by the Government.⁸²⁸ This was one of the significant Jacobin-style interventions to the people’s religious life during the Kemalist modernization. As a modernist, Mustafa Kemal showed zero toleration to the religious social institutions which were seen as responsible for the backwardness of the Turkish society. The Law on the Maintenance of Order was one of the biggest factors in achieving this change.

⁸²⁵ Nur Bilge Criss, *Istanbul under Allied Occupation 1918-1923*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1999), 104. Ali Sarikoyuncu, *Milli Mücadelede Din Adamları [The Religious Men during the National Struggle]*, (Ankara: Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı, 1997), 26. Ercument Kuran, *Türk İslam Kültürüne Dair [In Relation to the Turkish Islamic Culture]*, (Istanbul: Ocak Yayınları, 2010), 160. Nur Bilge Criss, *Istanbul under Allied Occupation 1918-1923*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1999), 104. Lewis, *The Emergence*, 403.

⁸²⁶ “Kemal Designates a Sheik ul Islam,” *the New York Times*, 13 Apr. 1920, 12.

⁸²⁷ Bekir Sıtkı Baykal, *Heyet-i Temsiliye Kararları [The Decrees of the Representative Committee]*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1989), 9.

⁸²⁸ Kramer, *Islam Assembled*, 4.

3.2.1 Kemalist Reasons Behind the Closure of Dervish Lodges

What were the main reasons behind this significant reform? The first reason was that the independence of these dervish lodges was seen as a political threat to the centralist and secular government. Erik Zürcher emphasizes this situation as: “Whatever their political position, their widespread networks of convents and shrines, the obedience their followers owed to their sheiks and the closed and secretive culture of brotherhoods made them independent to a degree that was unacceptable to a modern centralist national government.”⁸²⁹ This independence gave a change to the dervish lodges to mobilize the masses. Therefore, the secular Kemalist government aimed to impede religious interests, particularly the mass mobilization capability of the religious orders from being influential in the realm of politics.⁸³⁰ As an example, Kemalist regime responded the Sheikh Said Rebellion of 1925, was led by Sheikh Said, an influential and revered sheikh of the Nakshibendi dervish order among the Zaza tribes, as banning all the dervish lodges in the east part of Turkey.

In addition, all of these religious orders and dervish lodges were seen as obsolete by the Kemalist reformers. In his political speech, *Nutuk*, Mustafa Kemal describes this reform as:

To abolish the dervish lodges and to ban all of the religious orders were done during the era of the Law on the Maintenance of the Order. The executions and applications in this issue were very necessary to prove that our society did not consist of people who were primitive and tied to the superstition. Is it possible to say a modern nation has a society which was dragged by sheikhs, sayyids, chalabis and left their fates and souls to the hands of fortune tellers, wizards, and exorcists? Should the works of these men and institutions, which showed the real character of the Turkish nation in a false way, be overlooked in the new Turkish State and Republic? We used the Law on the Maintenance Order in this reform to prove that our nation was not bigoted and in the medieval mentality.⁸³¹

⁸²⁹ Zürcher, *Turkey*, 192.

⁸³⁰ Kinross, *Ataturk*, 468. Kalaycioglu, *Turkish Dynamics*, 56.

⁸³¹ Ataturk, *Nutuk*, 870.

The third reason for this reform was the positivist attitude of the Kemalist reformers. Mustafa Kemal, as an ardent positivist, thought that all these religious institutions were not appropriate for the material benefits of the Turkish society and the leaders of these institutions were nothing against the light of science. In August 1925 he pronounced their doom in a speech at Kastamonu.⁸³² Mustafa Kemal declared:

It is shameful for a civilized nation to expect help from the dead. Let the worthy occupants of ...tombs rest in the happiness which they have found in a religious life. I can never tolerate the existence, in the bosom of civilized Turkish society, of those primitive-minded men who seek material and moral well-being under the guidance of a sheikh, possibly blind and hostile to the clear light of modern science and art. Comrades, gentlemen, fellow countrymen! You well know that the Republic of Turkey can never be a country of dervishes and sheiks and their disciples. The only true congregation is that of the great international confraternity of civilization. To be a real man it is necessary to do what civilization commands. The leaders of the dervish lodges will comprehend this truth, which will lead them voluntarily to close those institutions as having already fulfilled their destiny.⁸³³

3.2.2 First Kemalist Initiatives Against to Dervish Lodges and Their Closure

The Sheikh Said Rebellion of 1925, led by dervish sheiks who urged their followers “to overthrow the godless Republic and restore the Caliph,”⁸³⁴ helped Mustafa Kemal not merely to stifle his opposition but to push through the rest of his religious reforms. Since the revolt had been inspired by a dervish order, the Nakshibendi, it was a good moment to sweep away all the dervish orders, regardless of complexion. After suppression of Revolt in June 1925, the Independence Tribunals banned all the dervish lodges in the east part of Turkey.⁸³⁵ The Tribunal advised the

⁸³² Kinross, *Ataturk*, 468.

⁸³³ Soyak, *Memoirs from Ataturk*, 264.

⁸³⁴ Lewis, *The Emergence*, 261.

⁸³⁵ Kinross, *Ataturk*, 467. Lewis, *The Emergence*, 404.

Government to ban all of these institutions in the rest of Turkey. However, the Government did not take a decision in this subject until Mustafa Kemal showed his dislike to the dervish lodges.

The first attack on the dervish lodges came from Mustafa Kemal in August 1925. While Mustafa Kemal was on a trip to the north part of Turkey to promote wearing hats, he mentioned the dervish lodges, too. He directly showed his dissatisfaction with the existence of these institutions. In his speech in Cankiri on August 31, 1925, Mustafa Kemal said that the dervish lodges should be shut down. “None of us needs the advices of the dervish lodges. We are strengthening ourselves by civilization, science, and technique; we are walking on our path with this mentality.”⁸³⁶

After getting the sign from Mustafa Kemal, the Government took a decision to ban all dervish lodges on September 2, 1925.⁸³⁷ According to this decree, the dervish lodges were ramshackle and filthy institutions which led the innocent Turkish people astray. They were also seen as obstacles on the way of modernization and progress. By these decrees of the government the dervish lodges were dissolved and banned, their assets impounded, their convents and sanctuaries closed, their prayer meetings and ceremonies prohibited. The ban of the dervish lodges expelled 20,000 dervishes from their missions.⁸³⁸ Moreover, the Government decided to arrange the dress of the religious officers by this decree. After the ban of entire dervish lodges, Turkish people were warned against making any donations to these institutions.⁸³⁹

This decision of the government was welcomed by the Kemalist press. Yunus Nadi Bey, head of the newspaper *Cumhuriyet* and the deputy of Mugla, expressed his thoughts about the

⁸³⁶ *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, 1 Sep. 1925, 1. *Aksam*, 2 Sep. 1925, 1.

⁸³⁷ *BCA*, 2 Sep. 1925, Document no: 5.43.18. Zürcher, *Turkey*, 173.

⁸³⁸ Lewis, *The Emergence*, 405. “Dervishes Are Ousted By Turkish Decree,” *the New York Times*, 25 Oct. 1925, E1.

⁸³⁹ *Ayin Tarihi [History of Month]* 6, no. 18 (Sep. 1925), 517. *BCA*, 3 Sep. 1925, Document no: 13.114.53.

dervish lodges in his article “tekayalar” (dervish lodges). In his article, Yunus Nadi Bey mentioned the historical phases of the dervish lodges. According to him, at the beginning they were functional for the fraternity of the society but all of them degenerated at the end of the Ottoman Empire. After repeating the Kemalist thesis in this issue, Yunus Nadi praised Mustafa Kemal how he was right in this action.⁸⁴⁰

The decree was applied as soon as possible in the major cities by the Government. In Istanbul, all the dervish lodges, approximately two hundred, were closed on September 7, 1925. Not only the dervish lodges were closed but also the tombs of Ottoman Sultans were banned.⁸⁴¹ The ban on dervish lodges and the tombs of the Ottoman Sultans were very welcomed by the Dean of the College of Science and the members of the University in Istanbul.⁸⁴²

After the abolition of the dervish lodges, the Government took some decisions about the goods and the buildings of these institutions. One of these decisions was sending all goods which had historical values to museums for protection. Beyond this decision, the appropriated buildings of the dervish lodges would be converted into schools. Moreover, one of the most well-known dervish lodges in Konya, the Rumi dervish lodge, was converted into Museum after the decision of the Government.⁸⁴³

⁸⁴⁰ Yunus Nadi, “Tekayalar” [Dervish Lodges], *Cumhuriyet*, 2 Sep. 1925, 1.

⁸⁴¹ *Cumhuriyet*, 4 Sep. 1925, 1. “Turkey Bans Dervishes,” *the New York Times*, 5 Sep. 1925, 5. *Aksam*, 7 Sep. 1925, 1.

⁸⁴² *BCA*, 12 Sep. 1925, Folder: 232112, Document no: 194.330.13.

⁸⁴³ *BCA*, 16 Sep. 1925, Folder: 259-4, Document no: 15.59.5. *BCA*, 11 Oct. 1925, Document no: 2.13.17. *BCA*, 13 Dec. 1925, Document no: 12.104.21. *BCA*, 6 Apr. 1926, Folder: 259-6, document no: 18.24.4.

3.2.3 Debates in the GNA and the Implementation of Penal Sanctions towards to Members of Dervish Lodges

The dervish lodges were banned by the Government's decree on September 2, 1925, but there were not any penal sanctions on their members before November 1925. The law, which enabled the imprisonment of the disciples of the dervish lodges, was passed in the Assembly on November 30, 1925. Refik Bey, deputy of Konya, was the architect of this law like the Hat Law of 1925. During these discussions in the Assembly, the Kemalist majority controlled the Assembly entirely. There was no objection to be heard from any dissidents. Refik Bey and Ekrem Bey talked about the negative effects of the dervish lodges on the Turkish society in their speeches in the Assembly. While Refik Bey denounced the dervish lodges as the tools of poisonous efforts and main sources of treachery, Ekrem Bey pointed out that these lodges were sources of the ideological fanaticism. As an interesting point, while there was no objection to this law, the Kemalist deputies did not hesitate to stifle any possible opposition in their speeches.

In the resolution of the law which aimed to ban the dervish lodges, Refik Bey repeated the Kemalist thesis that these dervish lodges were the tools of poisonous efforts within the state. Even though there were some innocent people who were the disciples of these dervish orders, these places were the main sources of treason. After Refik Bey, Ekrem Bey, deputy of Rize, supported the abolition of all dervish lodges. Ekrem Bey thought that this law would be one of the most important laws in the history of Turkish Republic. He showed his satisfaction with the ban of these entire dervish lodges which he saw as disgusting social places. Moreover, he believed that these lodges caused political turmoil during crisis. Ekrem Bey pointed out that these dervish lodges were sources of ideological fanaticism, and should be sliced and broke into pieces by Republican laws. Ekrem Bey said that he was proud of this law for killing ideological fanaticism. The Turkish

Republic would be a role model for the rest of states which were struggling under the pressure of ideological fanaticism. While he was condemning the fanaticism of the dervish lodges, Ekrem Bey himself gave a good example for the Kemalist fanaticism in his speech. He further attacked Nureddin Pasha because of his last proposal. Ekrem Bey said that there was no difference between Nureddin Pasha and the people who were executed because of their actions against the Hat Law.⁸⁴⁴ This was one of the best examples of the restriction of freedom of speech in the Assembly and how Kemalist deputies were intolerant to this freedom.⁸⁴⁵ After the reading of all articles, the law was accepted and passed in the Assembly on November 30, 1925. With this law, all the dervish lodges and the tombs of religious leaders and Ottoman Sultans were closed and if someone trying to organize and open a dervish lodge would be punished with this law.⁸⁴⁶

This law was interpreted by *the New York Times* very interestingly. William Jourdan Rapp, described Turkey as a “kaleidoscopic country” in his article. This event was seen as more important than the rest of the revolutions enabled by the Kemalist regime. In his article Rapp underlined this important situation as: “in the Republic of Turkey one of the recent revolutionary changes, not even the abolition of the Caliphate and the disestablishment of the religious courts and the religious schools in the separation of Church and State, is as important in their effect on the religious life of the people as the suppression of the various dervish orders recently decreed by that iconoclastic body the Grand National Assembly of Angora.” Rapp pointed out the importance of these lodges for the illiterate classes for gathering and learning some basic knowledge. In Istanbul there were

⁸⁴⁴ *TBMM ZC*, 30 Nov. 1925, v. 19, 282- 283.

⁸⁴⁵ Nureddin Pasha remained in the Assembly as an independent deputy until August 1927, the end of the second period of the Grand National Assembly.

⁸⁴⁶ *TBMM ZC*, 30 Nov. 1925, v. 19, 288. Kinross, *Ataturk*, 468. Davison, *The Modern Nations*, 132. Jung and Piccoli, *Turkey at the Crossroads*, 60. Yerasimos, “*The Monoparty Period*,” 85.

258 monasteries belonging to the seventeen more important orders. Many orders held their meetings in private homes with a great number of them well-attended. As a result of this ban the religious practices of great numbers of people would be affected. Rapp thought that this ban was related with the Kurdish revolt which occurred in February 1925. On the other hand, the ideological approach of the Kemalist regime towards to the dervish lodges was interpreted as: “the nationalists, who are in general extreme rationalists and non-believers, also regard the practices of the dervishes as medieval and feel that they must be abolished if the country is to embrace Western civilization successfully.”⁸⁴⁷

In conclusion, one of the Kemalist reforms in the social area was the ban on the dervish lodges which had run for centuries in Turkish society. Instead of chastening these old social institutions, the Kemalist movement chose to destroy them forever as a radical blow. The institutions for the ordinary Muslims were banned and the Kemalist regime eliminated another social and political organization which threatened its existence. However, the Kemalist regime could not stop all these institutions forever. The dervish lodges have carried on their existence in a secret way until today.

Direct intervention into people’s religious duties presented another problem. The regime wanted to control every single religious authority. It gave no credit to any independent religious authority. The Directorate of the Religious Affairs,⁸⁴⁸ the highest religious authority under the direct control of the regime, became an institution which was forced to approve the regime’s

⁸⁴⁷ William Jourdan Rapp, “Turkey Puts Her Ban on the Dervish,” *the New York Times*, 13 Dec. 1925, 15.

⁸⁴⁸ The Directorate of Religious Affairs was established in 1924 after the abolition of the Ottoman Caliphate. Duties of the Directorate are to execute the works concerning the beliefs, worship, and ethics of Islam, enlighten the public about their religion, and administer the sacred worshiping places.

policies. This attitude contradicted the Kemalist regime's efforts to represent itself as a secular system.

The regime's attitude to the freedom of speech and conscience was another problem with the enlightenment ideology of Kemalist discourse. As mentioned above, the Kemalist regime achieved all these reforms by the help of the penal sanctions, especially by the help of the Law on the Maintenance of Order. All opposition to Kemalist decisions was seen as a reactionary attempt on the existence of the regime. Not only had the ordinary people been silenced but also members of the Parliament. The weak objections of Nureddin Pasa to the Hat Law were suppressed by threatening him with expulsion from the Assembly. The Kemalist discourse, which depicted itself as a people's regime, did not care so much for the concerns of people.

The Kemalist thought, which has blamed the Islamic tradition as a backward one because of the regime's so-called positivist and rational character, has another contradiction. According to the Kemalist notion, tombs visited by ordinary people were symbols of reaction and backwardness. Because of this mentality, the tombs of the Ottoman leaders were closed for visits. However, the tomb of Atatürk was later seen and used by the Kemalist regime with the same logic. Mustafa Kemal's mausoleum became a central place where the statesmen showed their respect to Mustafa Kemal. Kemalist leaders sometimes visit his mausoleum today to complain about the so-called reactionary efforts against him. This is a kind of contradiction with the enlightenment mentality of Kemalist modernization.

3.3 Legal Reforms: Accepting the Swiss Code as the New Civil Code in 1926

One of the important reforms during the Kemalist modernization was a new Civil Code for the state in 1926. The Swiss civil code was translated with minor modifications and adopted as the

civil code of the Turkish Republic as on February 17, 1926.⁸⁴⁹ The Swiss Civil Code was seen as the “newest, best, and most democratic civil code” among the rest of the European civil codes by the Kemalist Government. Therefore, the Kemalist regime preferred to accept that civil code for modernizing the laws in Turkey.⁸⁵⁰ Beyond the Swiss Civil Code, the Kemalist Government accepted a new penal code based on the Italian code and a commercial code based on the German code at the same year.⁸⁵¹

The Kemalist mentality behind this reform was to repeal Islamic Holy Law from the legal sphere of the Turkish Republic.⁸⁵² Creating a secular state would be possible by removing Islam from the legal structure of the old Ottoman society. Mustafa Kemal and his companions believed that after dismissing Islam and its law in Turkey, the modernization and secularization of the country would be achieved. The old tradition of the Ottoman legal system, which gave rights to every ethnic and religious group to apply their customary law, was ended with this reform. Ersin Kalaycioglu summarizes the general purpose of the Kemalist regime in this reform as: “The legal system of the Turkish Republic was thus based on completely secular principles. All linkages between religion and law were severed. The clergy was left devoid of any legal authority to exercise over any realm of life. The legal and religious authority of the religious institutions of the ancien regime was thus completely eradicated.”⁸⁵³

⁸⁴⁹ Kalaycioglu, *Turkish Dynamics*, 54. Price, *A History of Turkey*, 129. Zurcher, *Turkey*, 173.

⁸⁵⁰ *TBMM ZC*, 17 Feb. 1926, v. 22, 1.

⁸⁵¹ Howard, *History of Turkey*, 97. Davison, *The Modern Nations*, 132. Price, *A History of Turkey*, 130. Zurcher, *Turkey*, 173. Jung and Piccoli, *Turkey at the Crossroads*, 60.

⁸⁵² Howard, *History of Turkey*, 97. Altunisik and Tur, *Turkey*, 21.

⁸⁵³ Kalaycioglu, *Turkish Dynamics*, 54.

Another goal of this reform was to achieve the European legal system which was based on reason and wisdom.⁸⁵⁴ For these reasons, Mustafa Kemal sought to change the legal system of the country in an appropriate time. He managed this change when the Law on the Maintenance of Order was in force and there was no opposition to his modernization attempts. Therefore, this change was another one which came from top to bottom. This section will cover the contradictions of this reform in the early period of the Turkish Republic.

3.3.1 The Mecelle and Legal Reforms in the Ottoman Empire

In the classical era of the Ottoman Empire, Islamic law (Sharia) was the predominant source of the law. Islamic law had four different sources, which were the Quran, the prophetic tradition (Hadith), the consensus of opinion (ijma) and the “analogy of the jurists” (kiyas) in the Ottoman Empire. While Islamic law was predominant in civil law, customary law (orf) and sultanic law (kanun)⁸⁵⁵ were used, together with Islamic law, in financial, administrative, and political areas. The two latter legal systems, however, were not permitted to conflict with the principles of Islamic law.⁸⁵⁶

The secularization of the legal structure of the Ottoman Empire was seen in the Tanzimat Era the first time. The prominent figure of the Tanzimat Era Ali Pasha was the leader of this project. The introduction of a land code and a new penal code in 1858, a reorganization of the commercial tribunals (amalgamated with mixed courts in 1860), and further commercial and maritime codes of French origin in 1861 and 1863, were realized during this period. While Ali

⁸⁵⁴ Cecen, *Kemalism*, 103-104.

⁸⁵⁵ Kanun (Sultanic Law): A regulation of a non-Islamic nature issued by the sultan. The kanuns were expected to be in conformity with Islamic law. Somel, *Historical Dictionary*, 148.

⁸⁵⁶ Halil Inalcik, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age 1300-1600*, (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1973), 166. Hanioglu, *A Brief History*, 18. Somel, *Historical Dictionary*, 138.

Pasha mostly desired to accept an adoption of the French Civil Code, Cevdet Pasha, who was convinced that a Christian-based law would not be acceptable to the Muslim population, was in favor of basing a civil law on Islamic principles. For effectuating the new civil law, a committee was set up. The Mecelle, consisting of 16 books and 1851 clauses, served as the civil code of the Ottoman Empire in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It was the first attempt to codify a part of the Sharia-based law, which was mostly relied on the Hanafî legal tradition, in an Islamic state. The first section of Mecelle was appeared in 1869, and it was completed in 1876.⁸⁵⁷

The Mecelle provided previously scattered legal precedents with a coherent framework and introduced the first Islamic laws on procedures for judgment, debt, and real property rights. While it covered most areas of civil law, it exempted family law, inheritance law, and pious foundation law (waqf). Therefore, the Mecelle was not a complete Civil Code. However, this did not diminish the importance of the Mecelle during its implementation. After the Kemalist single party regime was established in 1925, further legal reform, which was one of the significant steps of the Kemalist regime in Turkey, became possible. The Mecelle was changed completely in 1926 as the last step of the secularization of the civil code.⁸⁵⁸ This change enabled unification of the legal system in Turkey.

⁸⁵⁷ Lewis, *The Emergence*, 116- 121. Berkes, *Development of Secularism*, 167. Somel, *Historical Dictionary*, 176. Hanioglu, *A Brief History*, 74.

⁸⁵⁸ Gulnihâl Bozkurt, *Batî Hukukunun Türkiye 'de Benimsenmesi [The Adoption of the Western Law in Turkey]*, (Ankara: TTK Yayınları, 1996), 161-163. Somel, *Historical Dictionary*, 176. Lewis, *The Emergence*, 121.

3.3.2 Searching an Alternative Civil Code and First Kemalist Initiatives towards to the Legal Reform

The Mecelle was yet not seen as an obsolete civil code during the Turkish War of Independence. The Kemalist leadership did not totally disagree with its necessity. In his speeches, Mustafa Kemal underlined the importance of the Mecelle and suggested possible changes to some of its articles which did not fulfill the necessities of people at that time. In his opening speech in the Assembly in March 1922, Mustafa Kemal emphasized that a committee would be established for changing some articles of the Mecelle which were not useful for needs of people. The next year, he also underlined the works of the committee as adding laws about inheritance and testament which did not take part within the Mecelle. Mustafa Kemal pointed out once more that the Mecelle would have to accommodate the modern necessities.⁸⁵⁹

While Mustafa Kemal had an idea to reform the Mecelle between 1920 and 1923, his thought changed at the end of 1923. He evaluated the Mecelle as insufficient for realizing his reforms in this area.⁸⁶⁰ Therefore, he sought to replace Mecelle with another civil code. The Kemalist reform attempts in the legal system started at the end of 1923 after Mustafa Kemal's speech about Mecelle, the Ottoman civil code. In his speech Mustafa Kemal declared that the new Turkey would not adhere to the provisions of Mecelle which were inapplicable for the necessities of the Turkish society at that day. Moreover he added that "we would ameliorate our legal system until we achieved one like the most civilized nations. It was blindness and ignorance to govern today's people with the laws which were legislated a hundred, five hundred, a thousand years ago

⁸⁵⁹ *TBMM ZC*, 1 Mar. 1923, v. 28, 4- 8.

⁸⁶⁰ Dural, *His Story*, 125.

for the society at that time.”⁸⁶¹ In *Aksam*, Necmeddin Sadik echoed the thoughts of Mustafa Kemal on the modernization of the law. In his article Necmeddin Sadik underlined that society should be governed by civil laws but not be hostile to Islamic provisions. When Turkish society accepted European science in different areas, such as the economy, it would be inevitable to accept European laws. Turkey would accept the European civil code in the subjects of marriage, divorcement, and inheritance. The religion should be removed from the worldly affairs and kept in the conscience. According to Necmeddin Sadak, Mustafa Kemal was the enemy of reaction and especially of spiritual sovereignty. The reactionary was the enemy of the progress of the Turkish society. Necmeddin Sadak supported Mustafa Kemal in his modernization effort and he believed that the People’s Party of Mustafa Kemal needed unity in these efforts. Mustafa Kemal could not incite the society to modernization by himself; he needed a strong party and government for achieving his goals. However, there was a very strong opposition within the party against such modernization.⁸⁶² From this perspective, it is clear that Mustafa Kemal did not have an absolute power within the state to realize top down reforms in a Jacobin way at the end of 1923. This would be enabled after the law on the Maintenance of Order was accepted in March 1925. Moreover, the Kemalist press did not ignore the Islamic provisions completely in 1923.

Mustafa Kemal and his associates tried to set up new commissions in the Ministry of Justice to change the old legal system in 1924. However, the members of these commissions did not accept foreign laws at the beginning. For them, the provisions of existing law were preferred firstly to solve a problem, if they were not enough for a solution, the laws of other nations would be used.

⁸⁶¹ *Milliyet*, 5 Feb. 1930, 1. (This is a feuilleton with the title of “Gazi and Revolution” which started on 27 November 1929.)

⁸⁶² Necmeddin Sadik, “Teceddud Fikirlerinin Tatbiki Lazimdir” [It is Necessary to Implement the Thoughts of Modernizing], *Aksam*, 3 Dec. 1923, 1.

Beyond the commission members Seyid Bey, the Minister of Justice, had also some concerns about foreign laws. In his speech in the Assembly Seyid Bey discussed future changes in the Turkish civil code. He talked about the work in the commission about the possible changes. According to Seyid Bey, if the Members of Parliament found these changes insufficient and wanted to expedite them, it would not be logical, because foreign laws were very comprehensive and they had to be examined very carefully. Therefore, the change in a law should not be hurried. Moreover, Seyid Bey discussed different approaches to law. According to him, there were two main systems in the world at that time. One was Islamic law and the other was European law. There was a conflict and difference between European law and Islamic law in some points, but a unity in other matters. However, it was not easy to compile this unity, because the committee had to consider the social conditions of Turkish society carefully and which necessities would be appropriate for it. Therefore, legal reforms should be slow if the Government did not want to modify them subsequently.⁸⁶³ The approach of Seyid Bey was very interesting at that time. As the Minister of Justice and a staunch Kemalist Seyid Bey was looking for a moderate change in the civil code instead of a sudden change in 1924. Moreover, the Kemalist Minister believed that there were two different laws in the world and Islamic law was not easily disregarded.

The cautious attitude of the members of the commission triggered the wrath of Kemalist press. In *Aksam*, Necmeddin Sadik ridiculed the commission as a republic based on Sharia provisions. In his article Necmeddin Sadik compared the works of the commission members to religious books. Those works did not fulfill the needs of the Turkish society because of their narrow minded perspectives. The commission members evaluated the problems of the society in a religious way and they had no idea about the worldly affairs of the society. Necmedin Sadik said

⁸⁶³ *TBMM ZC*, 26 Jan. 1924, v. 5, 90.

that it was a normal attitude for these ascetic commission members who were preparing the nation only for the Day of Judgment.⁸⁶⁴

While the commission and the Minister of the Justice preferred gradual change, Mustafa Kemal did not find this approach sufficient for achieving his goals in the legal area. As an authoritarian leader, he wanted to change society rapidly. The legal reform would be possible after the Law on Maintenance of Order, passed by the Assembly in March 1925. In his speech during the opening ceremony of the Grand National Assembly in November 1925, Mustafa Kemal pointed out that the legal reforms should be passed in the Assembly as soon as possible. Mustafa Kemal thought that the Turkish society had many troubles and difficulties because of the obsolete provisions of outdated laws. Therefore, the Republic should be reinforced by modern European laws. He especially mentioned about the changes in the civil code and the commercial code in his speech.⁸⁶⁵ As mentioned above, in March 1922 and March 1923, Mustafa Kemal had previously held a positive attitude towards the Mecelle. He was looking for some modification of it but not totally altered. However, when he became the absolute authority in Turkey, the fate of Mecelle was sealed also.

3.3.3 Accepting the Swiss Civil Code as the New Turkish Civil Code

The directive of Mustafa Kemal in the Assembly accelerated the works of legal reformers in Turkey. Mahmut Esat Bey, who became the Minister of Justice in November 1924, was the key figure in the change of the legal system in Turkey. As an ardent Kemalist, Mahmut Esat Bey was also influenced by Western thought. He believed that the Western legal system should be accepted

⁸⁶⁴ Necmeddin Sadik, “Ahkami Seriyeye Mustenid Cumhuriyet” [The Republic which is relying on the Provisions of Sharia], *Aksam*, 27 Feb. 1924, 1.

⁸⁶⁵ *TBMM ZC*, 1 Nov. 1925, v.19, 9-10.

completely without any hesitation. If someone opposed the decision of the Turkish revolution which would embrace the Western civilization utterly, he would be wiped out.⁸⁶⁶ This was a good illustration of the Kemalist reaction against any opposition to its modernization efforts. If someone opposed any reform, he should be wiped out.

While a commission of twenty-six jurists, deputies, lawyers set to work on adapting a new civil code to Turkish needs in September 1924, this commission was not effective at the beginning. Mahmut Esat Bey and his close associates like Sukru Saracoglu and Sukru Kaya became influential in this task after the regime became solid in March 1925. While Lewis asserts that this commission began to work on adapting the Swiss Civil Code in September 1924,⁸⁶⁷ this assertion is not true. When Mahmut Esat Bey and his colleagues decided to translate a European civil code instead of preparing a Turkish civil code which would be based on the Western principles, the commission examined many civil codes of European nations during summer 1925. The French civil code was dismissed as an outdated civil code and the commission did not want to accept that one. On the other hand, the Austrian civil code was considered as having an absolutist notion of the Habsburg Dynasty. Therefore, the commission did not prefer that civil code, either. The German civil code was another one to be considered as a new Turkish civil code, but it was seen very technical by the members of the commission; therefore, it was not accepted. The last civil code, examined by the commission, was the Swiss civil code. The commission preferred the Swiss civil code as a new Turkish civil code because of its secular and democratic mentality. Moreover, it was a new civil code and had a plain language which was easily understood and interpreted by

⁸⁶⁶ Kieser, "An Ethno-Nationalist Revolutionary and Theorist of Kemalism: Dr Mahmut Esat Bozkurt (1892-1943)," 25.

⁸⁶⁷ Lewis, *The Emergence*, 267.

the jurists.⁸⁶⁸ Because of its notion of the equality of men and women, the Swiss civil code was seen as the best civil code by the Kemalist regime.⁸⁶⁹

Cumhuriyet announced this civil code as the new Turkish civil code which would reinforce the Turkish family with strong principles. Polygamy would be banned by this civil code, and marriages would be solemnized by civil officers not by the religious authorities.⁸⁷⁰ Not only polygamy but also divorce by the mere fiat of the husband would be ended in Turkey under the modernized Civil Code which was to be introduced in the National Assembly soon.⁸⁷¹ The equal divorce right for women was praised by *the New York Times*. This matter would put an end to “one of the bitterest phases of women’s subjection – the right of a man to divorce his wife at will and with no trial” according to the newspaper. However, this new law could not be retroactive. This matter was important because of recent rumors of the divorce of Mustafa Kemal in an old style. While Latife Hanim, the former wife of Mustafa Kemal, tried to attempt to annul the divorce, it was not successful. Mustafa Kemal used the old style to be divorced from his wife.⁸⁷² Andrew Mango summarizes Mustafa Kemal’s divorce as: “On 11 August, Mustafa Kemal informed the government that, six days earlier, he had divorced his wife according to Muslim canon law.”⁸⁷³ From this perspective, while Mustafa Kemal wanted to establish a Western civil code in Turkey, he divorced his wife in an old style.

⁸⁶⁸ Sevkett Memedali, “İnkilapci Mahmut Esat (Bozkurt) ve Turk Hukukunda İnkilap” [Revolutionary Mahmut Esat (Bozkurt) and Revolution in Turkish Law], *Ankara Üniversitesi Hukuk Fakültesi Dergisi* 1, no. 3, 316- 320.

⁸⁶⁹ *Cumhuriyet*, 11 Dec. 1925, 1.

⁸⁷⁰ *Cumhuriyet*, 11 Dec. 1925, 1.

⁸⁷¹ “Turkey to Prohibit Polygamy and Divorce by Husband Fiat,” *the New York Times*, 13 Dec. 1925, 1.

⁸⁷² “Turkish Women Win Equal Divorce Rights,” *the New York Times*, 27 Dec. 1925, E12.

⁸⁷³ Mango, *Ataturk*, 432.

After the Commission finished its task, the Swiss Civil code was translated and presented to the Government. The Inonu Government accepted this outline of the commission on December 20, 1925. The proposal of the Government was accepted without any change by the Commission of Justice in the Grand National Assembly. Before the discussions in the Assembly Mahmut Esat Bey, the Minister of Justice, tried to convince public opinion. He gave an interview to the correspondent of *Cumhuriyet* on January 12, 1926. In his interview, Mahmut Esat Bey said “there is no doubt that our new civil code is the best of the civilized World.”⁸⁷⁴

The adaptation of the Swiss Civil Code was praised for its treatment of minority rights in Turkey by *the New York Times*. The newspaper emphasized the consequence of this adaptation as “the Lausanne Treaty provision for the protection of Greek, Armenian and Jewish minorities will automatically disappear, because the Swiss code places minorities on the same legal footing as citizens of Turkey.”⁸⁷⁵ However, the implementation of the new Civil Code pruned these minority rights after a bunch of regulations. In particular the rights of establishing pious foundation (waqf) for the minorities were banned after the new Civil Code was accepted.⁸⁷⁶ Beyond the pious foundations, the minorities forced to forgo their rights in family laws which were related with their religion. First of all the Jewish minority surrendered its rights on August 1, 1926, after a meeting was held in their Rabbinate in Istanbul.⁸⁷⁷

⁸⁷⁴ *Cumhuriyet*, 13 Jan. 1926, 1.

⁸⁷⁵ “Turkey Adapts the Entire Swiss Civil Code; Ends Polygamy, Gives Equality to Minorities,” *the New York Times*, 16 Jan. 1926, 1.

⁸⁷⁶ Dilek Kurban and Kezban Hatemi, *Bir Yabancilastırma Hikayesi: Türkiye’de Gayrimuslim Cemaatlerin Vakıf ve Tasinmaz Mulkiyet Sorunu [A Story of Estrangement: The Question of Pious Foundations and non-Muslim Immovable Property in Turkey]*, (Istanbul: TESEV Yayinlari, 2009), 7-12. Orga, *Phoenix Ascendant*, 163.

⁸⁷⁷ “Museviler Din ile Dunya Islerini Ayirdilar” [Jews Separated the Religious and Earthly Affairs], *Milliyet*, 2 Aug. 1926, 1.

3.3.4 Acceptance of the New Civil Code in the Grand National Assembly and Afterwards

Finally the proposal of the Commission was discussed and accepted by the Assembly on February 17, 1926.⁸⁷⁸ During discussions in the Assembly, the Kemalist majority controlled the Assembly totally. In the discussions, Kemalist deputies asserted that the Mecelle was not a sufficient civil code and could not respond to the current necessities. Beyond that, it had a complicated structure which was a problem for judges. Moreover, the religious character of Mecelle was another problem for the Kemalist parliamentarians. According to their mentality, societies which were based on a religious law were in an early stage and would never progress. Therefore, they would not tie the destiny of Turkish people to medieval laws.

The Swiss civil code was preferred by the Government because of its more democratic structure than the rest of civil codes in Europe. While some Turkish authorities were concerned about the possibility of the Swiss civil code being applied in a relatively backward society, the Kemalist deputies had no doubt about its implementation. Beyond that, Kemalist deputies underlined the benefits of a new civil code for Turkish society in the future. According to them, Turkish women would rise to the position they deserved with this law. Mustafa Kemal was praised by Kemalist deputies as the inspiring leader behind this reform during discussions in the Assembly.

In the draft bill, Mahmut Esat Bey, the Minister of Justice, explained the reasons for this bill. According to the Minister, the Turkish Republic did not have a compiled civil code at the present. There was Mecelle, which consisted of 1851 articles, in effect, but only approximately 300 of these were appropriate for the current necessities. The rest of those matters were

⁸⁷⁸ Lewis, *The Emergence*, 276. Kalaycioglu, *Turkish Dynamics*, 54.

unnecessary for Turkish society. The base and the outlines of Mecelle was religion. However, the lives of human beings were exposed to radical transformation every day, even every moment. Nations which were based on religious laws could not fulfill the demands of nation and state in a very short time. Mahmut Esat Bey was sure that religions comprised of fixed provisions would be insufficient for the people's necessities in future. Therefore, religion should be kept only in the conscience.⁸⁷⁹

Mahmut Esat Bey discussed the reasons why the Kemalist regime accepted the Swiss civil code as a new civil code for the Turkish Republic. According to him, Mecelle, the civil code of the late Ottoman period, was not sufficient for judicial decisions. Moreover, the jurisprudence of Mecelle was not clear enough for judges. Mahmut Esat Bey did not agree with the concerns about the suitability of a foreign civil code for fulfilling the necessities of Turkish society. According to him, there were no differences between modern nations which were seeking to fulfill their needs. Especially the economic and social relations enabled the nations to create a great civilization. Therefore, the translation of the Swiss civil code would not be problem for the Turkish society. Moreover, Mahmut Esat Bey underlined that, if the Swiss civil code was applied well in an ethnically diverse state, referring to the German, French and Italian population in Switzerland, it would be applied in Turkey more easily because of its almost 90 percent homogenous structure.⁸⁸⁰

The Swiss civil code was seen as a fully developed code of a civilized nation by some of the Turkish authorities. Some were concerned about the possibility of the Swiss civil code's being applied in a relatively backward society. Mahmut Esat Bey rejected this concern also. According to him, the history of Turkish modernization belied this concern. The Turkish nation had a

⁸⁷⁹ *TBMM ZC*, 17 Feb. 1926, v. 22, 1.

⁸⁸⁰ *TBMM ZC*, 17 Feb. 1926, v. 22, 1-2.

capability to accept all of the changes in a modern way, but only a small group of people were against these changes because of their personal interests. Mahmut Esat Bey underlined the importance of the Turkish Revolution, which was proof of broad acceptance of the principles of modern nations. As a Kemalist, Mahmut Esat blamed religion and religious institutions as obstacles in the way of progress. From his perspective, if there was a contradiction between the modern civilization and the Turkish society, it was because of religious intuitions and medieval thoughts, not because of the capability of the Turkish nation.⁸⁸¹ This approach became popular among the Kemalist elites after the single party regime was established in 1925.

The destruction of the old Ottoman structure was another goal for Kemalists. For realizing this, Mahmut Esat Bey believed that old tradition and customs should be removed and the Western principles accepted immediately for the new society. He expressed that the Turkish nation would adapt its structure to the modern civilization, not to adapt the civilization to its structure. Therefore, the Turkish Republic should keep up with the European civilization without any hesitation. Mahmut Esat Bey recalled the replacement of old customs in modern states, like Germany, France, and Switzerland. He advised the same attitude for the Turkish Republic also. Mahmut Esat Bey heralded that with this law bill Turkey would change its thirteen centuries old civilization, and enter a new civilization.⁸⁸² This is one of the best example of the Kemalist modernization mentality. The Kemalists relied on changing society top down methods by accepting a few laws in a very short time.

During discussions in the Assembly, the Kemalist majority controlled the Assembly totally. The Kemalist deputies talked about the benefits of a new civil code for the Turkish society

⁸⁸¹ *TBMM ZC*, 17 Feb. 1926, v. 22, 2.

⁸⁸² *TBMM ZC*, 17 Feb. 1926, v. 22, 2-3.

in future. First of all, Mahmut Esat Bey explained the reasons of this bill of law. He underlined that he was encouraged by the inspiration of his great leader, Mustafa Kemal, when he gave this proposal. Mahmut Esat Bey believed that this law would complete the Turkish revolution. Therefore, it should be accepted immediately. Turkish society would be beneficial by the help of this modern civil code.⁸⁸³

After Mahmut Esat Bey, Sukru Kaya, deputy of Mentese, expressed his thoughts about this subject. He also thanked to the Great Savior, referring to Mustafa Kemal, for his inspiration in this law. According to Sukru Kaya, when the Turkish nation took definite steps towards progress and civilization, connecting its worldly affairs to dull and obsolete provisions was illogical. Therefore, the Turkish nation could not tie itself to these kinds of old principles. Sukru Kaya blamed Ottoman governments for not accepting any change in the civil code. However, the Mecelle was the civil code during the last period of the Ottoman Empire, but Sukru Kaya ignored this point. In his speech, Sukru Kaya talked about the notion of the republic as a salvation by the Turkish nation. According to him, to protect and reinforce the Republic could be possible by accepting modern laws and dismissing the principles which fostered reaction. Sukru Kaya elucidated why he preferred the Swiss civil code to a wholly new civil code. First of all, making a new civil code would take time, and the Government could not wait. Therefore, a new and modern civil code could be applied easily to the Turkish society. The Swiss civil code, which was a virtuous civil code according to him, was seen as the most modern and liberal by the Government.⁸⁸⁴

Emin Bey, pro-Kemalist deputy of Tokat, underlined the future secular character of the Turkish civil code. He thought that this law marked a new stage for modern Turkey. According to

⁸⁸³ *TBMM ZC*, 17 Feb. 1926, v. 22, 230.

⁸⁸⁴ *TBMM ZC*, 17 Feb. 1926, v. 22, 231- 232.

him, political progress under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal was the first stage of the national sovereignty. This law would reinforce the notion of the national sovereignty as a second stage. Besim Atalay, another Kemalist deputy of Aksaray, raised the same topic. He pointed out that the Turkish Republic achieved many goals in the political and economic areas and by accepting the civil code its achievement in the legal area would be fulfilled. Moreover, Besim Atalay argued that the Republic could not be governed by the obsolete provisions of the Sultanate and Caliphate. Following the Western path in the legal area should be the core understanding, because the Turkish Republic should follow Western civilization in science and technique; it would be same in the law also.⁸⁸⁵

Yusuf Kemal Bey, deputy of Sinop, was the last Kemalist deputy to talk about this bill. He suggested attacks on the tradition and customs would be beneficial for the state. In his speech, Yusuf Kemal Bey blamed the Mecelle as it was accepted without popular demands,⁸⁸⁶ ignoring that there was not any demand from the public for this Kemalist reform too. Therefore, this situation –reforms in spite of people’s wills- contradicted the populist character of the Kemalist regime.

The new Turkish Civil Code, which with a few exceptions was identical to Switzerland’s, was approved by the Assembly unanimously on February 17, 1926.⁸⁸⁷ The legislation was published on April 4, 1926 in the Official Journal. The new Civil Code was effectuated six months later on October 4, 1926.⁸⁸⁸ The newspaper *Aksam* announced this event as the Turkish Republic’s

⁸⁸⁵ TBMM ZC, 17 Feb. 1926, v. 22, 232-233.

⁸⁸⁶ TBMM ZC, 17 Feb. 1926, v. 22, 233.

⁸⁸⁷ “Turkey Adopts New Code,” *the New York Times*, 19 Feb. 1926, 14.

⁸⁸⁸ Bahir Mazhar Erureten, *Kemalizm: Cagdas Devlet- Cagdas Toplum [Kemalism: Modern State- Modern Society]*, (Istanbul: Sistem Yayıncılık, 1998), 51. Lewis, *The Emergence*, 267.

taking a special position among civilized nations by accepting and applying the new civil code. According to the newspaper, the Swiss civil code was one of the masterpieces of civil codes in the World.⁸⁸⁹ Mustafa Kemal showed his satisfaction with this new civil code in his inaugural speech in the Grand National Assembly on November 1, 1926. In his speech, he indicated that the obstacles which prevented the progress of the Turkish nation were removed by this legal reform. According to him, this reform met the real necessities and wishes of the nation and the results would appear in a short time.⁸⁹⁰

The reform in the legal area was praised by the foreign press after it was accepted in the Turkish Grand National Assembly. *The New York Times* interpreted the main reason for the Kemalist legal reform as “the leaders in the new Turkish Republic were plainly making a determined effort to free themselves from the fetters which had bound them to medieval viewpoints and regulations.”⁸⁹¹ In *the Living Age* F. de Garando emphasized this determination as: “the Swiss Civil Code and the Italian penal code have ousted Islam’s old customary religious law.”⁸⁹² Beyond Islamic law, the Muslim religious teachers were affected negatively because of this reform also. Wedding ceremonies which had been performed by religious teachers for centuries, would be void after the law was implemented. Under the new Civil Code, effective September 1, marriages would be performed by a municipal functionary designated by the Prefect. The prefect of Istanbul, Muhiddin Bey, would soon perform the first marriage under the new code.⁸⁹³

⁸⁸⁹ *Aksam*, 5 Oct. 1926, 1.

⁸⁹⁰ *TBMM ZC*, 1 Nov. 1926, v.27, 2.

⁸⁹¹ “New Codes in Turkey,” *the New York Times*, 5 Jul. 1926, 10.

⁸⁹² F. De Garando, “Impressions of Ankara,” *The Living Age*, 3 Jul. 1926, 16.

⁸⁹³ “Civil Weddings for Turks,” *the New York Times*, 1 Jun. 1926, 27.

In conclusion, the Kemalist reform in the legal area aimed to secularize Turkey by dismissing Islam from the judicial system. While the Kemalist modernists interpret this reform as an original reform totally different than the Tanzimat and Constitutional Eras⁸⁹⁴, it is clear that the legal reforms during the Kemalist modernization followed a similar path. The Mecelle was a result of modernizing the judicial system in the late period of Ottoman Empire. Its Islamic character was dismissed by the Kemalists in order to make Turkey a secular state.

Mustafa Kemal mentioned the necessities and demands of Turkish people for a new civil code in many speeches. However, this was not entirely true. Ordinary people, especially in rural areas, did not really knew about the reforms during the Kemalist regime. Bernard Lewis emphasizes this reality as: “The voting of the Swiss civil code by the Turkish Assembly did not, of course, transform Turkey overnight into a Middle Eastern Switzerland. In the towns and in the villages near to the main roads and railway lines, the new laws of marriage, divorce, and inheritance were, in the main, enforced. In the countless villages that made up the rest of the country, the old ways survived.”⁸⁹⁵ These reforms were completely ordered top down method in a Jacobin style and some people in the rural areas resisted these reforms. According to records in the archives, not only the ordinary people acted against the laws but some officials also. As an example, in Kutahya, the head of the township and the other headmen in the villages were dismissed because of their marriages contrary to the law.⁸⁹⁶ From another document, it is clear that the Islamic marriages were common in rural areas even in 1940s. The Government decided to record children who were born outside civil marriages.⁸⁹⁷

⁸⁹⁴ Cecen, *Kemalism*, 103.

⁸⁹⁵ Lewis, *The Emergence*, 267.

⁸⁹⁶ *BCA*, 24 Dec. 1927, Folder: 9018, Document no: 102.667.19.

⁸⁹⁷ *BCA*, 26 Jan. 1944, Folder: 20133, Document no: 25.142.1.

İsmet İnönü, the closest friend of Mustafa Kemal and the second President of Turkey, described the reluctance of people to accept legal reforms. He pointed out that the reforms were criticized harshly by reactionaries during this period.⁸⁹⁸ Interestingly there was not any opposition in the Assembly to this reform. This situation was one of the results of the Law on the Maintenance of Order, which barred freedom of speech at that time. While ordinary people showed their dissatisfaction to the reforms, the MPs were totally under the influence of the Kemalist leadership.

Dismissing traditions and customs caused reluctance among people during this reform. While they could not show their dissatisfaction easily, one of the main critiques to the Kemalist reformation in the legal area came from Rıza Nur, former Minister of Health and later Minister of Education in early 1920s. He escaped from the country in 1926 because of the Kemalist attack on opponents at that time. In his memoirs, Rıza Nur Bey interpreted the reform as an unfortunate development for Turkish society. According to him, while Turks escaped Arab customs and traditions, they were caught by foreign customs. The new civil code was based on Roman law and contained overtones of Christianity, but, Turks had been Muslims for more than a thousand years. Accepting a foreign civil code without any retouching was a grave mistake.⁸⁹⁹

3.4 Women's Rights during the Kemalist Modernization

Women's rights was one of the most important pillars of Kemalist modernization and its discourse. Change was seen as great progress in Turkish society. The main Kemalist assertion is that Turkish women got most of their rights from the Kemalist regime. It is true that the women's revolution was a significant part of Kemalism. However, the contribution of the Kemalist regime to women's rights is exaggerated by staunch Kemalists. As an example, Nermin Abadan-Unat,

⁸⁹⁸ İnönü, *İsmet İnönü'nün Hatıraları*, 101.

⁸⁹⁹ Rıza Nur, *Hayat ve Hatıratım* [My Life and Memoirs], (Istanbul: Altındag, 1968), 1192-1193.

who was the first female political scientist, an ex-senator, a promoter of women in academia, and a defender of women's rights in Turkey, declared "if Mustafa Kemal did not exist, perhaps I would not exist. I suppose now you have understood why I am a Kemalist, why I am a nationalist."⁹⁰⁰ In another example, Gunseli Naymansoy reviewed the biographies of female engineers in the early republican period. According to Naymansoy, "if Mustafa Kemal did not exist, the female engineers would have no chance in their education."⁹⁰¹ This belief has been common among Kemalist scholars.

However, education for girls was not exclusively a Kemalist goal. To educate women was one of the traditions of Tanzimat and the Second Constitutional Era in the late period of the Ottoman Empire. Moreover, when the Grand National Assembly was inaugurated on April 23, 1920, the parliamentarians shared the mission of Ottoman intellectuals, even though the state was in the midst of the liberation war. As an example, just a month after the inauguration of the Assembly, Hacı Suleyman Efendi, a conservative deputy of Izmir, emphasized the importance of education for girls. While the Turkish War of Independence was continuing and the state was in grave danger, conservative deputy Hacı Suleyman Efendi blamed ignorance as the reason for Turkey's plight. The future of Turkey would be saved by the education of peasants and girls. One of his quotes was very significant: "To establish a small school in a village is better than to establish a great mosque in a big city." Hacı Suleyman Efendi underlined the importance of education of women to grow future generations. If Turkish girls would be more educated, they could produce a better future. Therefore, this goal should be achieved as soon as possible.⁹⁰² This speech

⁹⁰⁰ Arat, "*The Project of Women and Modernity in Turkey*", 95.

⁹⁰¹ Gunseli Naymansoy, *Ataturk'un Muhendis Kizlari (The Engineer Daughters of Mustafa Kemal)*, (Eskisehir: Sanayi Odasi, 2010), 1-2.

⁹⁰² *TBMM ZC*, 22 May 1920, v.2, 7.

demonstrates how conservative deputies also shared the importance of the women's education with Kemalists in the early stages of the Turkish War of Independence.

Another Kemalist fallacy is denying the Ottoman contribution to the progress of women's rights. Moreover, this approach asserts that the condition of women and their rights actually deteriorated under the Ottoman Empire.⁹⁰³ According to this Kemalist discourse, women lived in the dark and had not enough rights before Mustafa Kemal deigned to give all of their rights to them. Turkish women were in a better situation in pre-Islamic times, so the regime should improve their situations, which had deteriorated during the Ottoman Empire.⁹⁰⁴ For achieving this advancement, Mustafa Kemal granted women's rights, even though they were not accepted by some modern European states.⁹⁰⁵ Moreover, the Kemalist discourse holds that Islam was the barrier to equality of men and women. Because of this conception, Kemalist leaders denied their Ottoman past and looked for remedies in pre-Ottoman and pre-Islamic times. However, women's rights were a phenomenon in the Ottoman Empire. Moreover, in both the classic and late period of the Ottoman Empire, women had rights and there were not many differences between them and their European contemporaries.⁹⁰⁶ This section will explain the reality behind Kemalist discourse on women's rights.

3.4.1 Women's Rights in the Ottoman Empire

The Ottoman Empire was one the longest-lived dynasties in history. Islam was the main characteristic feature of the Empire. The relationship between different nations, races, and ethnic

⁹⁰³ Feyzioglu, "*Ataturk ve Kadin Haklari*," 118.

⁹⁰⁴ Erureten, *Kemalizm*, 50.

⁹⁰⁵ Cecen, *Kemalism*, 109-110.

⁹⁰⁶ Nisanyan, *Yanlis Cumhuriyet*, 205.

groups were organized by Islamic and customary laws. The relationship between women and men was also determined Islamic law and popular tradition. The degree of the influence of these factors was dependent on social conditions and geographic location. Muslim women living in towns prior to the 19th century were circumscribed by the main conditions of Islamic law.⁹⁰⁷

Did Islam exclude women from every sphere of life in the Ottoman Empire? The answer of this question will correct one of the main Kemalist mistakes. While Kemalists assert that women were mostly oppressed under the Ottoman Empire, the classical and late period of the Empire disproves this assertion. In the classical era, especially in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the women of the Imperial Harem were very influential on the politics of the Empire. It is true that being veiled restricted some of actions of women in the public sphere; however, in the private sphere Ottoman women had a great freedom which was not different than Ottoman men. It is known that the higher class of the Ottoman women had great wealth. The middle and the lower class women also had some wealth in the classic era of the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman women held 30% of real estate properties in the classic period of the Empire, a ratio almost the same as today.⁹⁰⁸

Beyond Nisanyan, Bernard Lewis discusses the status of women in the classical era. Lewis underlines the importance of the property rights of Ottoman women in an Islamic society as:

It has often been remarked that the position of women in the Islamic world was in one important respect significantly better than that of women in the Western World until quite modern times. That is in the ownership of property. In the Western world, until fairly recently, in most countries married women did not dispose of their own-property, which became more or less the property of, or at least was fully controlled by, the husband. This was not the case in Islamic law. A woman could

⁹⁰⁷ Somel, *Historical Dictionary*, 323.

⁹⁰⁸ Nisanyan, *Yanlis Cumhuriyet*, 205.

own property, inherit property, and even after marriage, retain certain rights to the property she brought into the marriage.⁹⁰⁹

Eleanor Bisbee also emphasizes the rights of women in the classical era: “Property rights of Turkish women have always been respected. Turkish husbands receive no dowries. Wives retain control of their own property of every kind from cash to real estate, and can use or dispose of it with or without their husbands’ consent.”⁹¹⁰ From this perspective, it can be said that women had their rights to possessions, and the ratio of the Ottoman period was similar like the modern Turkey. Therefore, it is impossible to say that Ottoman women were excluded from property rights in the classical era of the Ottoman Empire.

During the Tanzimat Era, Ottoman women showed their ability to fight for their rights like their European counterparts. At the beginning, the Ottoman women fought to gain their right to education. A major change of the Tanzimat Era was the extension of educational opportunities for girls. Women of the highest classes of society had always had access to a good, private education; the Tanzimat reformers had added a few girls’ schools, women’s training colleges, and art schools.⁹¹¹ The first secondary school for girls was inaugurated in 1859. The first female teacher’s training school was established in 1870 and the first female teacher started to teach in 1873.⁹¹² The Female Teachers’ Seminary, which was established in 1870, constituted the beginning of women’s participation in public life. Beyond these schools, an industrial school (mektebi sanayi) for women was set up in 1884. Ottoman women had some achievements in publishing during the Tanzimat Era also. Sukufezar, the first magazine which was published by women, had a good reputation

⁹⁰⁹ Bernard Lewis, *Faith and Power: Religion and Politics in the Middle East*, (London: Oxford University Press, 2010), 94.

⁹¹⁰ Bisbee, *The New Turks*, 38.

⁹¹¹ Lewis, *The Emergence*, 224-225.

⁹¹² Berkes, *Development of Secularism*, 176.

among the Ottoman women in 1886. Moreover, female authors like Fatma Aliye and Ayse Sidika became the prominent representatives of Ottoman women, demanding greater rights for them.⁹¹³

Following the revolution of 1908, women increasingly took part in public social activities in the Second Constitutional Era. The Committee of Union and Progress and its ideologue Ziya Gokalp regarded it as their duty to raise the social status of Muslim women. While educated women were still few in number in the Ottoman Empire, Ottoman women enjoyed the sympathy and support of most men among the Young Turks for female education and emancipation at this period. This support enabled noteworthy progress especially in the women's education. Opening the doors first of the middle and secondary schools, then of the university, to female students, thus preparing the way for their entry into the professions and into public life, was one of the successes of the Young Turk regime.⁹¹⁴ In 1908 and 1909 the Young Turk regime started a number of new normal schools, and founded two high schools for girls on the model of high schools for boys already in existence, which had been patterned after the French.⁹¹⁵ Moreover, the Turkish university in Istanbul was open to men and women on equal terms from 1916, and Ottoman girls could go to university after that time.⁹¹⁶

Ottoman women were welcomed in activities outside of their homes in World War I. First of all they were considered as an important strength, useful during the war, by the leaders of the CUP. Handan Nezir emphasizes the contribution of the Ottoman women to the Ottoman forces in the war as:

In an era of war, women could further contribute to the strength and efficiency of Turkish army through their participation in the war effort both on and off the

⁹¹³ Somel, *Historical Dictionary*, 323. Nisanyan, *Yanlis Cumhuriyet*, 210.

⁹¹⁴ Kinross, *Ataturk*, 476. Lewis, *The Emergence*, 225. Somel, *Historical Dictionary*, 324.

⁹¹⁵ Rosalind Toynbee, "The Turkish Woman of Today," *Forum*, Sep. 1928, 419.

⁹¹⁶ Charles Pound, "Turkish Women Still Striding Onward," *the New York Times*, 16 Apr. 1933, SM8.

battlefield. Women could help the needy, raise funds for the war effort, take part in patriotic demonstrations, and nurse wounded soldiers. Talat pasha, in particular, urged women to contribute to the nation's military revival by joining the Red Crescent, like their European counterparts in the various national Red Cross organizations. The Women's national Defence League (Mudafaa-I Milliye Hanimlar Cemiyeti, 1913), the Women's Section of the Red Crescent Society (Osmanli Hilali Ahmer Cemiyeti Kadinlar Heyet-I Merkeziyesi, 1914), and the Society for Aid to Needy Soldiers Families (Asker Ailelerine Yardimci Hanimlar Cemiyeti, 1915), became the leading philanthropic societies of the time.⁹¹⁷

Beyond their activities in the battlefields, Ottoman women replaced men in certain jobs, in factories, offices, and public services also. "The Society for Finding Employment for Women", which aimed both to make them useful and to give them a means of livelihood in the absence of their men was established by the Young Turk Government at this period. As an example, women of the laboring classes established a labor unit and did their jobs with brooms and carts as street cleaners in Istanbul during World War I.⁹¹⁸

After the Second Constitution was accepted in 1908, there were more than twenty political and social organizations established by women active in the Ottoman Empire. Ottoman women were seen in industrial and business life in this period also. Many notable female figures appeared in this period in the late Ottoman history. Bedriye Osman Hanim became the first official to work for the telephone service in 1913. Belkis Sevkett Hanim was the first female pilot who achieved a great fame in 1913. Belkis Hanim tried to prove that "oriental women will not accept a position that falls behind that of their Western sisters." If we look at those figures carefully, we can say that the position of Ottoman women was not as backward as the Kemalists asserted. The difference between the status of Turkish women and their European counterparts in the opportunities for education and acquiring a profession was not wide. It is true that the change affected a small elite

⁹¹⁷ Handan Nezir Akmese, *The Birth of Modern Turkey: The Ottoman Military and the March to World War I*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005), 165.

⁹¹⁸ Kinross, *Ataturk*, 476. Bisbee, *The New Turks*, 39. Lewis, *The Emergence*, 225.

group of Ottoman women at the beginning, but the situation in was not very different than Ottoman women.⁹¹⁹

From this perspective, it is a fact that the Kemalist reformation grew out of Ottoman reforms. The distinction between the Kemalist reforms and the Ottoman reforms in women's rights emphasizes energetic and quick character of the Kemalist reforms. It is true that the Kemalist movement took very rapid steps in the modernization of the Turkish women by the help of extraordinary laws. However, this urgency caused many rejections and dissatisfactions among Turkish women afterwards. As an example, while the Kemalists thought that they would make women free by prohibiting headscarves in the early republican period, the headscarf became a symbol of freedom for the Turkish women after 1980s. The Turkish Governments have continued to ban the headscarf in the public sphere, and this attitude has been seen as an intervention against women's rights in an antidemocratic way.⁹²⁰

3.4.2 Women's Rights and Turkish Women Between 1920 and 1925

The Turkish Grand National Assembly was inaugurated on April 23, 1920 and a new Government was formed the next day in Ankara. The Ankara Government dealt with many problems in the war times and post-war times. Women and their rights were mentioned a few times in the Assembly in this period. The general attitude of the Assembly was very volatile in these years. There were some significant proposals, such as the political rights of women, offered by the conservative deputies rather than the Kemalists in the first period of the Grand National Assembly.

⁹¹⁹ Hanioglu, *Ataturk*, 210. Nisanyan, *Yanlis Cumhuriyet*, 209-210. Berkes, *Development of Secularism*, 273.

⁹²⁰ Nisanyan, *Yanlis Cumhuriyet*, 211.

3.4.2.1 Women's Rights in the Social Life

The seclusion of the Ottoman women from the public sphere diminished during the modernization attempts in the period of the Young Turks after the constitution was restored in 1908. One of the main parts of the modernization of Young Turks was raising the status of Ottoman women. By the help of educational opportunities, some Ottoman women had public positions such as doctors and civil servants at that time.⁹²¹ The Kemalist modernization followed the same path and tried to remove the seclusion of women totally in the social life.

Mustafa Kemal and his companions were aware of the importance of women in a modern society. In his tours in many cities in Turkey, Mustafa Kemal expounded his thoughts about women. In his speech in Izmir on January 31, 1923, Mustafa Kemal pointed to the importance of education not only for men but also for women. He underlined that modernization could be achieved by an entire society if it progressed together. If the modernizing of Turkey was desired, women should acquire modern skills like men.⁹²² Mustafa Kemal's visit to a different part of Turkey and his speeches about the emancipation of Turkish women was appraised by *the New York Times*. In his visit to Bursa Mustafa Kemal addressed to the teachers. Speaking before the Teacher's Association at Bursa, he declared that the work before the nation could be perfected only if Turkish women joined equally with the men in educating themselves and in taking an active part in the nation's affairs. During his tour in 1923 Mustafa Kemal never blamed Islam for women's seclusion from the public sphere. According to him the present seclusion of women in

⁹²¹ Kinross, *Ataturk*, 476. Lewis, *The Emergence*, 225.

⁹²² Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, *Gazi Mustafa Kemal Pasa Hazretleri Izmir Yollarinda: Muhtelif Mahallerde Irad Buyurduklari Nutuklar ve Hasbihaller [Gazi Mustafa Kemal Pasa is on the Way of Izmir: His Speeches and Talks in different Places]*, (Ankara: Istihbarat Matbaasi, 1923), 72-73.

Turkey came from Persian influence, asserting that it was not in accordance with the precepts of the Moslem religion. Moreover Mustafa Kemal recalled the olden times when Turkish women went to war side by side with their husbands, and when women succeeded to the throne of the Sultans. He added that at the very dawn of Islam there were woman savants, women of letters, women orators and women who opened schools, lectured and took a great part in public life. The Moslem religion, he said, ordered women to educate themselves in the same degree as men.⁹²³

The seclusion of women was a city habit, according to Mustafa Kemal. In another speech he said that Mohammed did not authorize or command the hiding of women from masculine eyes except those of their husbands and nearest relatives, and, anyway, the relegation of women to obscurity never has been among Moslems more than an urban custom.⁹²⁴ Mustafa Kemal made a distinction between this urban practice and rural tradition. According to him, Turkish peasant women engaged in every phase of men's work, cultivation of the fields, raising of livestock, and heavy timber jacking, and after the day's work is done participate in the same social life as the men. From Mustafa Kemal's perspective eighty percent of the Turkish women enjoyed the same rights as men. Part of the other 20 percent of women in big cities like Istanbul were restricted and their emancipation became a goal for Mustafa Kemal and the Kemalist leaders.⁹²⁵

In the first period of the Grand National Assembly, which lasted between April 1920 and April 1923, Kemalist leaders preferred a moderate path in women's rights which would not be contrary to Islamic principles. However they started to loosen the strict Islamic rules in different

⁹²³ "Kemal Pasha Wedded Speaks For Women," *the New York Times*, 21 Feb. 1923, 3.

⁹²⁴ "A Reformer as Well as a Conqueror," *the New York Times*, 22 Feb. 1923, 14.

⁹²⁵ "Mrs. Kemal Charms an American Visitor," *the New York Times*, 28 Feb. 1923, 1.

ways in 1923. One was abandon control of women's hair. The Chief of the Police declared that they could not cut women's hair or warn them to cover their hair if they were seen in public.⁹²⁶

For ending the seclusion of women from the public sphere, the Kemalist Government took another step in 1924. The curtains separating the Moslem women's compartments from those of the men's in Turkish trains, trolley cars and omnibuses were lifted that year.⁹²⁷ However, this event triggered very harsh reactions against the decision of the Government. The protest against the Government even within the Assembly proved that the Kemalist modernization project had no popular support in this area. When the Chief of Police ordered lifting of all the curtains which separated women and men in the trams and ferries, Ziyaettin Efendi, a conservative deputy of Erzurum, addressed a parliamentary question to the Minister of the Interior.⁹²⁸ In his question, Ziyaettin Efendi emphasized that lifting the curtains would cause many problems for Muslim women who had to stay together very closely with non-Muslim men. This would be a contradiction to Islamic law. Due to these reasons, he asked the Minister who gave this order to the police, and what kind of benefits was expected from this policy?⁹²⁹

Ferid Bey, Minister of Interior, responded to this parliamentary question that the Ministry did not give any order directly to the police chief in Istanbul. The curtains were lifted due to the sanitary necessities which were mentioned in the report of the Directorate of the Sanitary Matters. Moreover, Ferid Bey added that while the curtains were lifted, women and men did not sit together. Ziyaeddin Efendi was not convinced by these reasons. According to him, if the sanitary necessities were valid, why the police did not change the rest of the materials, such as velvet armchairs, which

⁹²⁶ *Aksam*, 16 Oct. 1923, 1.

⁹²⁷ "Turkish Women Seek Freedom," *the New York Times*, 24 Feb. 1924, XX2.

⁹²⁸ *BCA*, 26 Dec. 1923, Folder: 6244, Document no: 6.34.22.

⁹²⁹ *TBMM ZC*, 16 Jan. 1924, v. 5, 137.

could disseminate microbes too. Ziyaeddin Efendi expressed that he was not against the notion of modernity but he thought that every nation should protect its traditions and cultures. As a typical conservative, Ziyaeddin Efendi underlined his perspective on modernization as: “modernity is to assure security everywhere, to reconstruct the destroyed state, to construct new highways and railways, to exalt the nation in education, economy, and industry. While European nations are flying in the sky, we are transporting by oxcarts. When we are in these miserable conditions, do you think to modernize women in this way? Is modernization only sitting together with women? Where will we induce the nation? Will we drag the nation debauchery by the guise of modernity? Will we disrespect holy things?” Beyond these concerns, Ziyaeddin Efendi advised to the rest of the deputies in the Assembly to imitate Europe in the areas of science, education and industry, not imitating the attitudes which were inappropriate to the culture and the religion of Turks.⁹³⁰ However, these concerns of the conservatives were totally ignored by the Kemalist authorities after the Kemalist regime consolidated its power against conservative opponents in 1925.

The polygamy question was another subject of the women’s rights in this period. While it was an Islamic tradition, plurality of marriages had never been common in Turkey. In Ottoman Anatolia and the Balkans, polygamy was practiced only in a narrow circle of wealthy Muslims; traditionally, monogamy was the dominant practice.⁹³¹ Therefore, it had been practically abandoned in the early twentieth century in the Ottoman Empire.⁹³² Even the extraordinary conditions of the Turkish War of Independence could not revitalize this old tradition. One conservative attempt at restoring the harem as a national institution became a fact after Salib

⁹³⁰ *TBMM ZC*, 16 Jan. 1924, v. 5, 138-139.

⁹³¹ Somel, *Historical Dictionary*, 323.

⁹³² “Turkish Women Seek Freedom,” *the New York Times*, 24 Feb. 1924, XX2.

Hoca's resolution in 1923. He emphasized that the statistic of Government which showed that there were 6,171,000 women to 5,473,000 men in Turkey. With his supporters he argued that Turkey was unable to absorb this excess of women into its primitive economic system unless well-to-do Turks were permitted to support more than one wife. However, this attempt became void after Mustafa Kemal opposed this resolution.⁹³³ Although the proportion of polygamous marriages to the total number in Turkey was less than one to a thousand in 1924, the Kemalist Government confirmed a new law to forbid marriage to more than one wife except in 'unusual cases'.⁹³⁴ Thus, the polygamy question was over for the Kemalist reformers at that time.

The participation of the Ottoman women in local dance halls in the early 1920s created great anger among the conservative circles in this period. Religious authorities and deputies were also very anxious about the situation of Turkish women in Istanbul where foreign occupation was a fact. The religious deputies demanded a declaration about the immoral attitudes of Turkish women in Istanbul. Abdulgafur Efendi, one of the conservative deputies in the Assembly, summarized the situation in Istanbul as: "some of the women who called themselves Turk and Muslim were dancing with foreign officers in private and public meetings. They were committing infamies to scorn and degrade Turkishness and Islamism." Abdulgafur Efendi underlined that they were fighting not only for rescuing the homeland which was determined by National Pact, but also for the honor and the religion of the nation. Therefore, those men and women who were dancing with the officers of the occupied powers would be punished by the Turkish Grand National

⁹³³ "Old Guard in Turkey Wants Harems Back," *the New York Times*, 7 Sep. 1923, 32.

⁹³⁴ "Turkey Forbids Polygamy except in Unusual Cases," *the New York Times*, 6 Aug. 1924, 17.

Assembly. Hafiz Ibrahim Efendi, deputy of Isparta, supported Abdulgafur Efendi in this case. He condemned westernizers that to deceive the Turkish youth by the name of the modernity.⁹³⁵

While conservatives thought that dances were immoral, the Kemalist regime later promoted them as a sign of modernity when it increased its power in Turkey. *The New York Times* mentioned this encouragement by the Kemalist regime in 1924. The newspaper indicated that “three months ago it would had been impossible to see these ‘dansants’ at the leading hotels of Istanbul frequented by Turkish ladies, but today the wives and daughters of the best families are prominent on the public dancing floors.” According to the newspaper, the trend was encouraged by the Government at Ankara.⁹³⁶

3.4.2.2 Women’s Rights in Politics

Women’s suffrage was an important issue in this period, and allegedly one of the most progressive steps taken by Mustafa Kemal. It is true that Mustafa Kemal took a very progressive step in 1930s. We will see the positive and negative parts of this action in the next section. However, the suffrage issue was first raised by Huseyin Avni Bey, a prominent leader of the opposition Second Group in the Assembly, many years before Mustafa Kemal. Huseyin Avni Bey, later condemned as reactionary by the Kemalist regime, was the architect of this subject in the Assembly.

In November 1921, even though the Turkish War of Independence was continuing, Huseyin Avni Bey argued for women’s participation in local administration. In his speech, he pointed out that, because of the war, in many villages the population of men had decreased dramatically and women took all responsibility in their daily lives. Huseyin Avni Bey suggested

⁹³⁵ TBMM ZC, 31 Dec. 1921, v. 15, 269- 270.

⁹³⁶ “Changing Turkey,” *the New York Times*, 23 Jun. 1924, 18.

“if the taxes are collected from women, we have to accept their rights; there are no men in villages. There are many women more virtuous than men. You have to respect their virtues. There are hundreds of women who are the slaves of the usurpers in villages. The poor women are caring three or more families as the head of the family today. The Turkish Grand National Assembly has to accept women’s suffrage.” The demand of Huseyin Avni Bey caused some protests. When Hasan Basri Bey, deputy of Karesi, teased him with “I congratulate the feminist perspective of Huseyin Avni Bey,” Huseyin Avni responded “congratulate my humanity!” Even though some of the MPs were rejected Huseyin Avni Bey’s demand, Tunali Hilmi Bey, deputy of Bolu, supported his point of view. Tunali Hilmi Bey emphasized that the first time someone reflected his voice to the entire Turkish and Islamic world in this issue and because of that he congratulated Huseyin Avni Bey for his proposal.⁹³⁷ Finally, this proposal was rejected by most Kemalist deputies.

Women’s suffrage issue was discussed in the Assembly a second time in 1923 when the first period of the Turkish Grand National Assembly was over. Tunali Hilmi Bey raised the issue. When he explained his thoughts about electoral law, he mentioned women’s suffrage. After the Independence War, in many places, the female population was larger the male population. When Tunali Hilmi Bey raised the population issue, the rest of the Assembly shouted him down. Finally Tunali Hilmi retreated and could not finish his speech up because of the harsh reactions.⁹³⁸

While Tunali Hilmi Bey was criticized by the deputies, the Turkish press supported this initiative. *Akbaba* gave full support to his venture, emphasizing the inequality of women and men in economics and education. As an example, a woman who paid taxes had no rights in elections, but an 18-year-old man who was a servant to this woman could vote. This situation was an

⁹³⁷ *TBMM ZC*, 15 Nov. 1921, v. 14, 221- 224.

⁹³⁸ *TBMM ZC*, 3 Apr. 1923, v. 28, 17.

injustice. On the other hand, an ignorant man who had no ability could be elected, but women who were well-educated could not.⁹³⁹ *Akbaba* tried to convince the public opinion by some lyrical poems. In one of these poems, women should be elected as deputies in the Assembly, in order to dismiss old thoughts.⁹⁴⁰ In another poem, Yusuf Ziya Bey supported Tunali Hilmi in his efforts. If he overcame opposition, fanaticism would be ended and his name would go down in history.⁹⁴¹ The newspaper *Vakit* also discussed the possible election of Turkish women. The newspaper organized a questionnaire to assess public opinion in this subject. Most who participated were in favor of women's suffrage.⁹⁴²

In this period, a strong feminist movement was appeared in the press and politics. Nezihe Muhiddin Hanim, who was a Turkish women's rights activist, journalist, writer and political leader, touched on the problems of Turkish women in many interviews. In one she underlined her policy as: "we must first awaken and educate our Turkish women; we must teach them to aspire to higher things and teach them how to attain them."⁹⁴³ Public opinion in support of women's rights encouraged Nezihe Muhiddin Hanim and her friends to organize a meeting for women's rights.⁹⁴⁴ These reformist women had their own agenda to achieve their goals beyond the Kemalist regime. They wanted to participate to the elections and get a chance to join the Grand National Assembly in two years. Nezihe Muhiddin Hanim and her friends thought that they would be in the Assembly

⁹³⁹ "Kadınlar İntihab Etsin mi, Etmesin mi?" [Do Women Vote or Not?], *Akbaba*, 9 Apr. 1923, 1.

⁹⁴⁰ "Kadınlar Mebus Olmalı" [Women Should be Deputy], *Akbaba*, 9 Apr. 1923, 1.

⁹⁴¹ Yusuf Ziya, "Kadınlar Mebus Olaydı" [If Women Became Deputy], *Akbaba*, 12 Apr. 1923, 1.

⁹⁴² "Vakit'in Anketi: Kadınları İntihab" [The Questionnaire of Vakit: Electing Women], *Vakit*, 18 Apr. 1923, 1.

⁹⁴³ Josef Hans Lazar, "Turkish Feminists," *The Living Age*, 29 Sep. 1923, 599.

⁹⁴⁴ "Yeni Bir Hareket: Kadınlarımız Hukuk-u Siyasiye İstiyorlar" [A New Movement: Our Women Wanted to get Their Political Rights], *Vakit*, 31 May 1923, 1.

in 1925.⁹⁴⁵ Even though, the Republican People's Party was not established by Mustafa Kemal, Nezihe Muhiddin tried to establish Women's People Party with her friends in June 1923.⁹⁴⁶ Nimet Hanim, the vice president of the WPP, explained their aims as: "we neither want to be deputies nor to pursue political movements. Our first goal is to see the fruition of social and economic reforms. We will work and prove that women are a necessary quantity for the state. After proving this, we will demand our rights. Rather, we will say 'give them'. We will struggle until we will take them."⁹⁴⁷ This statement is very important. While the Kemalist orthodoxy asserts that women's rights were granted by Mustafa Kemal to the Turkish women, and Kemalist scholars, like Nermin Abadan-Unat, summarized her views as "if Mustafa Kemal did not exist, perhaps I would not exist"; there was a strong feminist movement beyond the Kemalist regime's aims.

The establishment of the Women's People Party and the participation of Turkish women in politics was seen as an important event by the foreign press also.⁹⁴⁸ In *the Living Age*, Josef Hans Lazar reported "an organization called 'The Turkish Women's Party' has been formed. It is already taking an active part in public affairs, and marks an important milestone in the evolution of Eastern and Islamic culture."⁹⁴⁹ In this interview Nezihe Muhiddin Hanim described the policy of the party as: "the objects of our Party are in a general way similar to those of feminist parties elsewhere in Europe; but our tactics are necessarily different from those of our Western sisters,

⁹⁴⁵ "Memleketimizde Kadinlik Hareketinin Pisdarlari Arasinda" [Among the Vanguard of the Feminist Movement in Our Country], *Ikdam*, 7 Jun. 1923, 1.

⁹⁴⁶ "Kadinlar Halk Firkasi" [Women's People Party], *Ikdam*, 16 Jun. 1923, 1.

⁹⁴⁷ "Kadinlar Halk Firkasi: Maksadi, Tarz Mesaisi, Gayesi Hakkinda Ikinci Reis Nimet Hanimefendinin Beyanati" [Women's People Party: The Statement of Nimet Hanim about the Goals, Methods and Purposes of WPP], *Tanin*, 19 Jun. 1923, 3.

⁹⁴⁸ "The New Turkey," *The Youth's Companion*, 8 Nov. 1923, 674.

⁹⁴⁹ Josef Hans Lazar, "Turkish Feminists," *The Living Age*, 29 Sep. 1923, 598.

because we live in a different kind of society, having a different civilization. The Turkish woman must share in the renaissance of her country. We Turkish women claim in social and political life the position that we are qualified to occupy and that we have a right to claim in return for our sacrifices and services in our country's war of liberation." Moreover, Nezihe Muhiddin Hanim added that their aim was the social, economic and political equality of women with men in Turkey. The first practical measure they sought was women's suffrage. She wanted the right to vote and to hold office as soon as possible. Beyond this, she did not feel that the political equality was not an end in itself but a means to a higher end. Equality would open the door to what they sought ultimately to attain – equal educational opportunities and equal property rights with men."⁹⁵⁰

While Nezihe Muhiddin Hanim was waiting on approval from the Government, the Turkish press showed their attention to this movement. In the magazine *Sus*, this new party was depicted as aiming to ameliorate the social and economic conditions of women instead of pursuing political goals.⁹⁵¹ This aimed of reducing Kemalist doubts about the newly established movement. However, the Government did not accept the establishment of this party. Nezihe Muhiddin Hanim and her friends then established a Turkish Women's Union in February 1924.⁹⁵² The Union was counted as a public interest union by the Government.⁹⁵³ Next year, when the Union wanted to nominate some of its members to the Assembly, Kemalists condemned this in *Cumhuriyet* in February 1925.⁹⁵⁴ While Kemalist discourse asserts that women's suffrage was the original idea

⁹⁵⁰ Josef Hans Lazar, "Turkish Feminists," *The Living Age*, 29 Sep. 1923, 599.

⁹⁵¹ "Kadinlik Alemleri" [Women World], *Sus*, 23 Jun. 1923, 3.

⁹⁵² "Hanimlar Birliđi Yeni Bir Program ile Saha-i Faaliyete Atiliyor" [Women's Union is Taking Step with a New Program], *Tanin*, 16 Feb. 1924, 3. Zurcher, *Turkey*, 180. Bisbee, *The New Turks*, 40.

⁹⁵³ *BCA*, 28 Jun. 1925, Folder: 80-11, Document no: 14.42.6.

⁹⁵⁴ "Kadinlar ve Mebusluk" [Women and Deputyship], *Cumhuriyet*, 25 Feb. 1925, 1.

of Mustafa Kemal and granted by him later, the official reports of the Grand National Assembly and the activities of the Women's People Party prove that this is another Kemalist distortion.

3.4.3 Women's Rights and Turkish Women From 1925 to 1935

After the founding of the Turkish Republic in October 1923, the Kemalist Government started its struggle for progress on women's rights. However, conservative opinion was very strong and the Kemalist regime could not take serious action during the first years of the Republic. The progress could be seen only after the Law on the Maintenance of Order was passed in the Assembly in March 1925. By the help of this law, Kemalists started their modernization efforts from top to bottom and women's rights were part of these reforms. Women's rights can be separated into two major parts in this period. The first is civil rights of Turkish women; the second is the right to vote. The first one was established after the Swiss civil code was accepted in 1926. The second one had three steps in 1930, 1933, and finally 1934. These reforms were considered the liberation of women by many Kemalists at that time.⁹⁵⁵ While Kemalist discourse identified itself as the vanguard of the women's rights movement in Turkey, this discourse has many contradictions, discussed below.

3.4.3.1 Women's Right in the Social Life

It is true that the Kemalist regime managed to change many traditions by its top down reforms. Dismissing the veil in public spaces, establishing a coeducational system, and extending suffrage to women were achievements of Kemalist modernization. However, these reforms in the women's rights were seen more important than improving the general rights of the Turkish

⁹⁵⁵ Afet Inan, *Ataturk ve Turk Kadin Haklarinin Kazanilmasi [Ataturk and Gaining Rights of Turkish Women]*, (Ankara: MEB Basimevi, 1968), 122. Butler, *Shadow of the Sultan's Realm*, 139. Bisbee, *The New Turks*, 39. Kinross, *Ataturk*, 479.

people.⁹⁵⁶ Why did the Kemalist regime pay too much attention to these reforms? The answer is mostly related to the Kemalist aim to create an image of an ideal woman in social life.

First of all, the Kemalist Government tried to change women's outer appearance in a moderate way. The veil never was completely outlawed in Turkey, but its use in public buildings and events was later prohibited.⁹⁵⁷ The regime tried to convince women to remove it. During his campaign to reform of men's headdress, Mustafa Kemal was certain Turkish women could be easily persuaded to throw aside their heavy veils. In his speech in Inebolu, Mustafa Kemal wanted Turkish women to show their faces to the world.⁹⁵⁸ While Turkish women in urban areas unveiled easily, Turkish women in country towns adhered to the veil.⁹⁵⁹ To break this tradition, some local governors tried to oblige women to uncover their faces. This experiment in the province of Trabzon aimed to test the reaction among women, who were more fanatic in their traditions and on the whole less submissive than the Turkish men.⁹⁶⁰ However, women did not appear in public, but instead stayed indoors until the order was repealed, and the order was a failure.⁹⁶¹

Foreign observers gave some details about the differences between urban and rural areas during their tours in Turkey. While these observers saw not a single veiled woman on the Europeanized side of Istanbul, they very rarely saw a woman's face in most parts of the Anatolia.⁹⁶² Finally, in the mid-1930s, some of the Kemalist authorities discussed whether women should be

⁹⁵⁶ Arat, "The Project of Women and Modernity in Turkey", 95.

⁹⁵⁷ Howard, *History of Turkey*, 96-97. Dismorr, *Turkey Decoded*, 21.

⁹⁵⁸ "Kemal Upholds Freedom for Turkish Women Although Divorced His Modern Wife," *the New York Times*, 14 Sep. 1925, 3. "Progress in Turkey," *the New York Times*, 15 Sep. 1925, 24.

⁹⁵⁹ "Turkish Feminist a Delegate Here," *the New York Times*, 16 Aug. 1927, 28.

⁹⁶⁰ "Turkey Tries Suasion to end Women's Veils," *the New York Times*, 14 Dec. 1926, 5.

⁹⁶¹ Rosalind Toynbee, "The Turkish Woman of Today," *Forum*, Sep. 1928, 416.

⁹⁶² "Despite Kemal Turkey Keeps Her Veil," *the New York Times*, 20 Nov. 1927, SM10.

prohibited from wearing a veil, but it was decided not to recommend any legislation on the subject. They believed that the rising generation which had not taken to the veil would be examples for their elders.⁹⁶³

In the early stage of the Turkish War of Independence, it was impossible for the Kemalist modernization to attack Islamic principles in law. However, this situation changed after the Kemalist regime became more powerful in 1925. When the new Civil Code was discussed in the Turkish Grand National Assembly in February 1926, the Kemalist regime tried to eliminate theology from legal subjects. By accepting this new law, polygamy was abolished, civil marriage became obligatory, divorce was a matter for the courts to settle, the status of women was affirmed, and the laws of inheritance were equal for both sexes.⁹⁶⁴ According to Kemalist leadership, Turkish society would benefit from this modern civil code. Mahmut Esat Bey, Minister of Justice, pointed out that Turkish women would rise to the position which they deserved under this law.⁹⁶⁵ Therefore, the Kemalist Government preferred the Swiss civil code as a new Turkish civil code because of its secular and democratic mentality. Moreover, it was a new civil code and had a plain language which was easily understood and interpreted by jurists. Because of its notion of the equality of men and women, the Swiss civil code was seen as the best civil code.⁹⁶⁶ Turkish women, especially in the urban areas, found more opportunities to get official posts after the implementation of this law.

⁹⁶³ "Turkey Lets Veil Stay," *the New York Times*, 20 May 1935, 10.

⁹⁶⁴ Rose Lee, "New Turkey Progresses at High Speed," *the New York Times*, 30 May 1926, 23. Howard, *History of Turkey*, 97. Davison, *The Modern Nations*, 133. Lewis, *The Emergence*, 267.

⁹⁶⁵ *TBMM ZC*, 17 Feb. 1926, v. 22, 230.

⁹⁶⁶ Somel, *Historical Dictionary*, 139. Altunisik and Tur, *Turkey*, 21. Kalaycioglu, *Turkish Dynamics*, 54.

While the participation of women to the dance halls were condemned by the conservatives during the Turkish War of Independence, beauty contests and dances were promoted by the Kemalist Government. In September 1925, Turkey had a really bizarre contest, totally alien to its tradition and moral values. Besiktas Jimnastik Kulubu, the oldest sport club in Turkey, organized a contest for the most beautiful pair of legs. The newspaper *Cumhuriyet*, one of the main Kemalist journals, announced the event and tried to convince women to participate. Only four ladies joined the contest and Enise Hanim, a student at the American College, won the contest. *Cumhuriyet* publicized Enise Hanim as the modern Turkish woman.⁹⁶⁷ This event was shocked the foreign press also. *The New York Times* interpreted this event as: “the modernization of Turkish femininity proceeds apace. The movement to discard the ancient Moslem veil seems to be merely a beginning and now Constantinople has had a contest to determine the owner of the most beautiful pair of legs in the City of the Golden Horn.”⁹⁶⁸

Beyond this contest, the participation of women in dancing was encouraged by the Kemalist Government. The foreign observers had very good details of the mentality of the Kemalist regime in these activities. Rose Lee indicated that the foxtrot was the main dance in the new Turkey in 1926. The participation of women in this dance was seen as a symbol of feminine emancipation by the Kemalist Government. Moreover, the Kemalist mentality forced people to join these activities as a symbol of modernity. Lee mentioned that “every official must bring out his wife and his daughters. Every woman must dance, whether or not she had ever done it before. The president himself was there to direct the festivities.”⁹⁶⁹

⁹⁶⁷ “Memleketimizde İlk Defa Yapilan Musabaka” [The Contest which was Made First Time in Our Country], *Cumhuriyet*, 6 Sep. 1925, 1.

⁹⁶⁸ “Turkey is Shocked Again,” *the New York Times*, 21 Sep. 1925, 8.

⁹⁶⁹ Rose Lee, “Turkey’s Forgotten Women Are Astir,” *the New York Times*, 20 Jun. 1926, SM23.

Beyond Lee's observation Rosalind Toynbee mentioned strange attitudes of the Kemalist regime to women participating in dancing: "Since the establishment of the new regime, women have undoubtedly become more conspicuous in ordinary life. They mix more freely with men on all social occasions and go to theatres and restaurants and dances – which they did not do before. The story is told of Kemal Pasha's order to his chief officials and generals to organize public balls in the provincial towns with the express purpose of inviting mothers to dance. If a high official organized the ball, the lower official had to attend, and his wife had to dance if the high official invited her. If once the mothers danced- so the argument ran- they could not forbid their daughters to do so and the taboo would be broken."⁹⁷⁰ From these perspectives, it can be said the Kemalist reform had no roots in the society, as even the high authorities and their wives could not accustom themselves to the situation easily.

3.4.3.2 Women's Rights in Politics

The Kemalist concept in women's rights was to exhibit women as a symbol of modernity. However, their concept was not original. The Kemalist modernists followed the same path as the Tanzimat reformers. They imposed reforms and wanted women to be passive during these reforms. Unlike their forefathers, Kemalists determined a two-sided mission to the Turkish women in this period. First of all, women would serve as the "body" of the reforms which would be visualized by their bodies. Secondly, the Kemalist women could be a good role model to stop possible degeneration of women in society.⁹⁷¹ In this case, what would happen if Turkish women resisted

⁹⁷⁰ Rosalind Toynbee, "The Turkish Woman of Today," *Forum*, Sep. 1928, 418.

⁹⁷¹ Tezcan Durna, *Kemalist Modernleşme ve Seckincilik: Peyami Safa ve Falih Rifki Atay'da Halkın İnsasi [Kemalist Modernism and Elitism: People's Instruction in the Works of Peyami Safa and Falih Rifki Atay]*, (Ankara: Dipnot Yayinlari, 2009), 87- 88.

being submissive to their fate as determined by Kemalist men? The Kemalist answer was “you will be free under our conditions.” The fate of Nezihe Muhiddin and Women’s Union was proof.

The Kemalist Government was opposed to the activities of the Women’s Union under the leadership of Nezihe Muhiddin. The main character of the Kemalist approach to the women’s rights movement was to control it strictly. As mentioned above, the political participation of women in the elections in 1925 was criticized harshly by the newspaper *Cumhuriyet*, one of the prominent publications of the Kemalist regime. The struggle of Nezihe Muhiddin was depicted as “irritable propaganda” by *Cumhuriyet*.⁹⁷² *Cumhuriyet* tried to dismiss the works of the members of the Union and criticized them harshly.⁹⁷³ The activities of the Women’s Union decreased after the Law on the Maintenance of Order in March 1925. The Union started to merge with the Republican People’s Party in January 1926, but the Kemalist Party rejected the participation of women in the political activities. The leaders of the Republican People’s Party suggested women to work in social projects instead of participating in political activities.⁹⁷⁴ Thus, the Kemalist regime promoted women’s rights after antidemocratic laws were passed in the Assembly. In a few years, Mustafa Kemal was exalted as the vanguard of the feminist movement, a great exaggeration by Kemalists.

After the Swiss Civil Code was accepted by the Turkish Grand National Assembly in February 1926, the women’s rights movement accelerated. In March 1927, the new Committee of the Union of Women was elected.⁹⁷⁵ In April 1927, Nezihe Muhiddin Hanim launched another

⁹⁷² *Cumhuriyet*, 25 Feb. 1925, 1.

⁹⁷³ “Hanimlar Faaliyette” [Women in Action], *Cumhuriyet*, 28 Feb. 1925, 1.

⁹⁷⁴ *Cumhuriyet*, 6 Jan. 1926, 1. *Cumhuriyet*, 10 Jan. 1926, 1.

⁹⁷⁵ *Cumhuriyet*, 26 Mar. 1927, 3.

campaign for women's suffrage. She said that Turkish women insist on their political rights.⁹⁷⁶ She underlined that they had the wisdom and perception of Turkish men, therefore, they could think as well as men in state affairs.⁹⁷⁷ While the Women's Union showed its seriousness in participating in the election, the leaders of the Kemalist regime stopped them again. First Semseddin Bey, deputy of Sivas, indicated that the Constitution specified only Turkish men could be elected as deputies to the Assembly.⁹⁷⁸ Kazim Pasa, the President of the Grand National Assembly, declared that Turkish women could not be deputies in the Parliament.⁹⁷⁹ Finally, the Kemalist regime threatened Nezihe Muhiddin and her friends' political activities in June 1927.

During a discussion about exemptions from military service in June 1927, Hakki Tarik Bey, deputy of Giresun, mentioned the women's suffrage issue and the contribution of women to the military services. He underlined that suffrage was a right for women and would happen in the future. Moreover, he pointed out that if voting was an issue related to the future of the Turkish state, military duty was another such issue. If women wanted to join in elections, they had to join in military duties too, because of the equality of the sexes.⁹⁸⁰

Recep Bey, the Minister of Defense, summarized the Kemalist point of view in explaining the relationship between women and the defense of the country. According to him, the theory held that if a state could reach perfect democracy, it could encumber all responsibilities of the state to all of its citizens equally. However, no states reached perfect democracy. Recep Bey said that

⁹⁷⁶ Yildiz Ecevit, "Women's Rights, Women's Organizations and the State," in *Human Rights in Turkey*, ed. Zehra Kabasakal Arat, 189.

⁹⁷⁷ "Kadin-Erkek Davasi Hareretleniyor" [The Case of Men and Women is Becoming Feverish], *Aksam*, 27 Apr. 1927, 1.

⁹⁷⁸ "Kadinlar da Istiyor" [Women are wanting also], *Milliyet*, 7 Jun. 1927, 1.

⁹⁷⁹ "Kadinlar Henuz Mebus Olamazlar" [Women Could not be Elected as Deputy just now], *Aksam*, 14 Jun. 1927, 1.

⁹⁸⁰ *TBMM ZC*, 21 Jun. 1927, v.33, 385.

Turkish women participated in the defense of Turkey by raising their children for the state. Motherhood was a central ideology of the Kemalist regime in second part of 1920s. In addition Recep Bey mentioned that there was an organization, pretending to be representative of Turkish women, which wanted to participate in political and social organizations. He reminded those women that the destiny of the state was not only in participating elections or discussions in the Assembly; there was another front, meaning motherhood.⁹⁸¹ Because of Kemalists' lack of enthusiasm women's suffrage was postponed until 1930.

The Kemalist press began to ridicule the participation of women in elections and the efforts of Nezihe Muhiddin Hanim. While the magazine *Akbaba* supported women's suffrage in 1923, its attitude changed totally by 1927. *Akbaba* dismissed Nezihe Muhiddin's efforts as the same "hash" which had been uttered for more than ten years. The magazine suggested Turkish women should raise the next generation and deal with household chores. The magazine summarized its point of view as: "in short: we don't want to accept our women with their manicured nails to the Assembly which is appropriate for men."⁹⁸² Necmeddin Sadik Bey interpreted the discussion in the Assembly as the result of the "racket" of Turkish women in the press.⁹⁸³ While the Kemalist press criticized the Women's Union harshly, Nezihe Muhiddin Hanim was hopeful for debate in the Assembly.⁹⁸⁴ However, the political struggles of Nezihe Hanim were not accepted by the Kemalist regime for a long time. The Government wanted to purge Nezihe Muhiddin Hanim and her friends in September 1927. On September 10, 1927, her Union was investigated by the police.⁹⁸⁵ Finally, Nezihe

⁹⁸¹ *TBMM ZC*, 21 Jun. 1927, v.33, 385.

⁹⁸² "Hanımlar Mebusluk İstiyorlar" [Women are Demanding Deputyship], *Akbaba*, 16 Jun. 1927, 1.

⁹⁸³ Necmeddin Sadik, "Kadınlarımız ve Mebusluk" [Our Women and Deputyship], *Aksam*, 23 Jun. 1927, 1.

⁹⁸⁴ *Milliyet*, 23 Jun. 1927, 1.

⁹⁸⁵ *Milliyet*, 11 Sep. 1927, 1.

Muhiddin Hanim was purged from all of her activities in the Union at the end of September, 1927.⁹⁸⁶ After this purge, the Women's Union became a charity organization instead of a political movement. Women's suffrage did not become a current issue again until 1930.

In March 1930, women's suffrage was discussed once more in the National Assembly during debate on the law of municipalities.⁹⁸⁷ On March 20, 1930, the change about the law of municipalities was discussed in the Assembly. In the preamble of the draft law, Sukru Kaya, Minister of the Interior, mentioned the importance of this draft. He underlined that this draft was prepared and written by the inspiration and directives of Mustafa Kemal. According to Sukru Kaya, Turkish women were already equal to men, and this draft would establish their rights in municipal elections. By the help of this law, Turkish women would get important positions in the municipalities.⁹⁸⁸

Agaoglu Ahmed Bey, deputy of Kars and future spokesman of the Liberal Republican Party, supported the draft also. He congratulated the Government's decision which enabled Turkish women to participate in local elections. He held that municipalities would be more representative than the Grand National Assembly, for after this law women would participate in the municipalities, but the Assembly would be represented by only men. Agaoglu Ahmed Bey proclaimed his hopes that women would be in the Grand National Assembly soon.⁹⁸⁹

The change in law of municipalities was approved by the Assembly on April 3, 1930, 198 deputies accepting this law by unanimous vote.⁹⁹⁰ When this law was discussed in the Assembly,

⁹⁸⁶ *Cumhuriyet*, 27 Sep. 1927, 1. *Milliyet*, 27 Sep. 1927, 1.

⁹⁸⁷ Butler, *Shadow of the Sultan's Realm*, 139. Kinross, *Ataturk*, 479.

⁹⁸⁸ *TBMM ZC*, 20 Mar. 1930, v. 17, 24.

⁹⁸⁹ *TBMM ZC*, 20 Mar. 1930, v. 17, 26.

⁹⁹⁰ *TBMM ZC*, 3 Apr. 1930, v. 18, 9.

Afet Hanim, (Mustafa Kemal's adopted daughter who became a history professor later), gave a public lecture in Ankara. At the beginning of her lecture, Afet Hanim said that the right of election would be enabled for all people regardless of sex. She was hopeful for the possibility of Turkish women as members of the Parliament. This law was a beginning of the full participation of Turkish women in elections.⁹⁹¹ When this law was effectuated, Turkish women were accepted into the Republican People's Party. Afet Hanim was accepted as the first female member of RPP at the same day.⁹⁹² Resmiye Hanim became the first female member of the RPP in Istanbul.⁹⁹³ The decision of the Government was welcomed by the Women's Union enthusiastically. The Union organized a meeting in Istanbul to support the Government's decision.⁹⁹⁴

After this change, Turkish women participated in local elections in September-October 1930. Some of the nominees of the Republican People's Party were elected in these local elections and became representatives in local municipalities.⁹⁹⁵ Therefore, this change was accepted as the first step for the women suffrage issue in the Kemalist reformation, followed by a change in the village law in 1933.

Changing some articles of village law was discussed in the Assembly on November 26, 1933. First of all Sukru Kaya Bey suggested changing the twentieth and thirtieth articles of the village law. According to him, if the Turkish children were known for their moral values and good character, this was the result of the compassion of Turkish women. According to Sukru Kaya, Turkish women were masters of their houses. In the villages, they were the masters of the

⁹⁹¹ *Cumhuriyet*, 4 Apr. 1930, 1.

⁹⁹² *Vakit*, 4 Apr. 1930, 1. "Turkish Women Keen for Vote Instruction," the *New York Times*, 20 Apr. 1930, 52.

⁹⁹³ *Milliyet*, 7 Apr. 1930, 1.

⁹⁹⁴ *BCA*, 14 Apr. 1930, Folder: 8024, Document no: 80. 526.4.

⁹⁹⁵ Ahmad, *The Making of Modern Turkey*, 89.

economics. Therefore, they had a right to participate in village elections. After this law was passed in the Assembly, they could be elected as village head.⁹⁹⁶

After Sukru Kaya, Recep Bey, deputy of Kutahya, summarized Kemalist reforms in women's rights since the Civil Code of 1926. According to him, Turkish women became equal to Turkish men after the Turkish revolution became a fact. While women were treated as secondary in the Ottoman Era, the Republican Government treated them as equal as men. After the Civil Code of 1926 was effectuated, Turkish women had opportunities to receive education alongside men. Moreover, the Republican Government granted election rights in the law of municipalities in 1930. Therefore, this new draft bill was the second step in women's suffrage. Turkish peasant women got their rights to be elected as the head of their villages only a few years after their urban sisters. Recep Bey mentioned the total number of the Turkish women who would have a right to say something about the destiny of Turkey. According to him, after the law of municipalities of 1930 and the village law of 1933, approximately five million Turkish women could participate in politics. This was a huge number and very important to future democracy.⁹⁹⁷ However, it is very difficult to talk about the democracy in Turkey at that period. The concept of election and the determination of the deputies was far removed from democracy. After the village law of 1933, the last step for women's suffrage in Turkey was the change in the Constitution which enabled women to be elected as parliamentarian in 1934.⁹⁹⁸

The amendment of the constitution to allow women rights to be elected as parliamentarians was discussed in the Assembly on December 5, 1934. Firstly, Ismet Inonu, Prime Minister of

⁹⁹⁶ TBMM ZC, 26 Oct. 1933, v. 17, 48.

⁹⁹⁷ TBMM ZC, 26 Oct. 1933, v. 17, 48-50.

⁹⁹⁸ Ahmad, *Making of Modern Turkey*, 89. Butler, *Shadow of the Sultan's Realm*, 139.

Turkey, explained the reasons for the proposal. He mentioned the role of Turkish women in history. When Turkish women had participated in the destiny of the state, Turkish civilization and the state were exalted in the world. Moreover, Ismet Inonu blamed the Ottoman period for treating women as a “knickknack,” never involved in state affairs. According to Inonu, the attitude of the Ottomans was not a Turkish tradition. Turkey should abandon Ottoman tradition, and the Kemalist revolution would use women in state affairs. Ismet Inonu emphasized that these rights were not a favor to Turkish women, for Turkish women had been forced to be backward unfairly. He raised the Turkish women’s struggle which merited all praise during the Turkish War of Independence. Turkish women had intervened in the destiny of the state; therefore they had a right to speak about state affairs. Ismet Inonu underlined the core of the Turkish revolution as the liberation of women. This liberation was the main achievement of Ataturk who rescued half of the nation, paralyzed by not having their rights.⁹⁹⁹ Ismet Inonu mentioned the liberation of women and their participation in elections. If we look at the first women parliamentarians closely, we can see how Kemalists used the notion of the liberation of women as a slogan.

After Ismet Inonu’s speech, other deputies competed to exalt the name of Mustafa Kemal and his decisions on women’s rights. Refik Koraltan, deputy of Konya, described how villains in the Ottoman period downgraded women’s conditions and rights. Refik Bey was proud of the Great Savior who took this decision in keeping with the merits of Turkish women. Ismail Memet, deputy of Sivas, exalted Mustafa Kemal and Ismet Pasa as leading Turkish women and peasants to prosperity. According to him, if Turkish women demanded their rights from the Ottoman Sultans, the response could be execution. This is one of the weirdest Kemalist statements. Turkish women started their struggle for their rights in the late period of the Ottoman Empire, but we have no proof

⁹⁹⁹ *TBMM ZC*, 5 Dec. 1934, v.25, 82-83.

of any executions. Refik Sevket Ince, deputy of Manisa, was also proud of Mustafa Kemal's policies, which deserved all respect, on women's rights.¹⁰⁰⁰

After the law passed in the Assembly, some notable Turkish women, such as Mevhibe Hanim, wife of Ismet Inonu, congregated in the Ankara People's House and sent a telegram to the Grand National Assembly. In the telegram, they showed their satisfaction with the decision of the Grand National Assembly. After that day, Turkish women would be better incorporated in state affairs. Necip Ali Bey, deputy of Denizli, welcomed the telegram of the Turkish women on behalf of the Grand National Assembly. In his speech, Necip Ali underlined that the Turkish Government had acknowledged the rights of women for a long time. He mentioned that Turkish women became judges three years previously and this opportunity had not been given to women in other states. Therefore, he was sure about the capability of the Turkish women to involve themselves in state affairs.¹⁰⁰¹

The general election for the fifth period of the Grand National Assembly was held on February 8, 1935. 17 women were elected as deputies from 400 total seats.¹⁰⁰² The ratio of the women deputies was 4.5%, and number of female deputies would not surpassed until 2007.¹⁰⁰³ In a single party regime, however all these names were chosen by Mustafa Kemal. If Mustafa Kemal

¹⁰⁰⁰ TBMM ZC, 5 Dec. 1934, v.25, 83- 85.

¹⁰⁰¹ TBMM ZC, 5 Dec. 1934, v.25, 90- 91.

¹⁰⁰² Kinross, *Ataturk*, 479. Ahmad indicates that 18 women were elected to the new Assembly, *Making of Modern Turkey*, 89. However, after the election there were 17 women were elected, in 1936, Hatice Ozgener won the by-election and joined to the Assembly. After her joint, the number of female deputies reached 18. "Milletvekilleri Genel Secimleri: 1923-2011 [The General Elections: 1923-2011], (Ankara: Turkiye Istatistik Kurumu Yayinlari, 2012), X.

¹⁰⁰³ Hanioglu, *A Brief History*, 213.

announced someone as a nominee of the Party, he or she would be a deputy. Therefore, it is better to understand that Turkey was far away from the representative democracy at that period

After the election of 1935, the Ismet Pasa Cabinet was formed on March 7, 1935. Turkish women parliamentarians had a chance to speak in the Assembly for first time during the vote of the confidence in the Cabinet. Nakiye Elgun, female deputy of Erzurum, addressed the Grand National Assembly. In her speech, she was proud of showing confidence in the Ismet Pasa cabinet as a female member of the Parliament. Nakiye Elgun expressed her satisfaction as a female being in the Parliament for first time and she thanked Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, who cherished Turkish women and gave them those beautiful and happy days.¹⁰⁰⁴ Nakiye Hanim and the other female members of the Assembly were from the chosen minority of Turkish women who were staunch Kemalists. On the other hand, Nezihe Muhiddin Hanim and her friends struggled for women's rights were ignored by the Kemalist regime. Their Union was forced to close down after they hosted the Twelfth Congress of the International Alliance of Women in 1935.¹⁰⁰⁵ This closure demonstrated how the Kemalist mentality used women's rights. According to the regime, there were no meaningful demands women could make on the state since the state had already given women their rights.¹⁰⁰⁶ The state and the regime were seen as an authority to bestow rights on women, demonstrating another contradiction of Kemalist regime.

In conclusion, the Kemalist regime, which followed an authoritarian path to modernize the country from top to bottom, accomplished social and legal reforms in Turkey after the Law on the Maintenance of Order was accepted in March 1925. The opposition was stifled by the Kemalist

¹⁰⁰⁴ *TBMM ZC*, 7 Mar. 1935, v.1, 32.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Hanioglu, *A Brief History*, 213. Bisbee, *The New Turks*, 40. Zürcher, *Turkey*, 180.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Nuket Kardam, *Turkey's Engagement with Global Women's Human Rights*, (Hants: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2005), 38.

autocracy, a step possible because of the regime's anti-democratic character during these reforms. However, the strict Kemalist regime could not stop popular protests. People, tired of authoritarian tendencies, showed their dissatisfaction to the regime in many ways. In particular, the Hat Law of 1925 caused much passive and active resistance, suppressed by the the Kemalist Government.

The Hat Law of 1925 was an early attempt at intervention by the regime in people's lives. The mentality of Kemalist regime was absurd in equating participating to the European Civilization with changing the outer appearance of the Turkish people. Another Kemalist contradiction was the supposed eagerness of people to change their traditional headgear. Kemalist orthodoxy asserts that the Kemalist regime accepted the Hat Law of 1925 in response to popular demands, after Mustafa Kemal became a role model for Turks. However, people were opposed to this law and they showed their dissatisfaction by protest. People's dissatisfactions were easily labelled a reactionary movement and the Kemalist regime then had a basis to suppress this protest. This law was not only a problem for the ordinary men, but also for deputies and officers. Many deputies in the Kemalist party were concerned about this change, but they were forced to accept this autocratic measure silently.

Another Kemalist reform was the ban on dervish lodges, which had existed for centuries in the Turkish society. The Kemalist regime preferred to destroy these social institutions instead of reforming them. Ordinary Muslims lost their institutions because of the antidemocratic attitudes of the regime. The contradiction in this reform was the direct intervention of the Kemalist Governments in people's religious beliefs while it called itself a secular regime which did not intervene in faith. Moreover, the Directorate of the Religious Affairs, the highest religious authority under the direct control of the regime, became an institution which was forced to approve

the regime's approach. This attitude was a contradiction for the Kemalist regime while represented itself as a secular regime.

Kemalist reform in law aimed to secularize Turkey by removing Islamic principles from the judicial system. The change in the civil code in 1926 was an important step. This change was the last phase of secularizing the Islamic Civil code which started after the Tanzimat Era. The Mecelle, which was the Ottoman civil code, was replaced by the Swiss Civil code which was seen as the newest and most appropriate civil code for the Turkish society. The Kemalist contradiction in this subject was the ambiguous attitudes of the Kemalist regime during this change. There was not any systematic and clear plan in the Kemalist mentality. Their decisions easily changed in a short period. While the regime thought to revise Mecelle in 1924, one year later they were seeking an entirely new civil code in a short period. Beyond this, while experts thought a quick change in the civil code would cause many problems, the Kemalist leadership did not share these concerns.

Finally, the Kemalist regime has a reputation for its achievements in women's rights, but it in fact only continued the tradition of modernizing efforts which started after the Tanzimat Era. The distinction of the Kemalist reforms in this area was their energetic and quick character, such as education of women and women's suffrage, through extraordinary laws. However, the education of women was not only the interest of Kemalist modernists; conservative deputies of Grand National Assembly shared the same idea. On the other hand, the Kemalist discourse gives undue praise to Mustafa Kemal for women's suffrage. As mentioned above, however the demands of women were uttered by intellectual Ottoman women, such as Halide Edib Hanim and especially Nezihe Muhiddin Hanim, many years before Mustafa Kemal. Not only these intellectual women voiced their rights but deputies such as Huseyin Avni Bey and Tunali Hilmi Bey raised this issue in the first period of the National Assembly. Moreover, the Kemalist attitude was mostly negative

until 1930. Therefore, the Kemalist discourse which says that Mustafa Kemal was the creator of women's suffrage is a great delusion. Moreover, the participation of women to the Parliament was a nominal one, strictly controlled by Mustafa Kemal. Beyond this, the feminist movement outside Kemalist control was not welcomed by the regime. The Turkish Women's Union, a significant organization, was dissolved because of its anti-government attitude in 1935. The Kemalist orthodoxy saw the state as giving all rights to women, so the Union was unnecessary.

Chapter 4 - Educational Policies of Kemalist Regime in Turkey

Education is one of the most important phenomenon to transform the traditional structure of Turkey into a modern one for the Kemalist modernizers. Kemalist orthodoxy suggests that the ‘civilized Turkish nation’ could only be successful by means of education. Mustafa Kemal criticized previous educational methods and blamed them for the backwardness of Ottoman society. Besides, Mustafa Kemal advised to the educators to inspire the next generations to struggle against foreign elements, both Western and Eastern, which were interfering with their existence, rights, and unity. He asserted that without changing people’s minds or without liberating people from tradition, nothing could be achieved. One of his well-known quotes he suggested this notion as an order to the teachers: “teachers, the new generation will be your creation.” Moreover, he described the educators as the honorable vanguards of the future salvation.¹⁰⁰⁷

From Mustafa Kemal’s perspective, individual actors were being insisted on as more important than the system; not a new educational system but teachers were seen as vital for the creation of new generations.¹⁰⁰⁸ This approach was an ideological approach which accepted teachers as the key factor of the transformation of society. These teachers should be organized under the guidance of the Teacher’s Association which would be an ideological instrument of the regime in every city of Turkey. The main goal for this association was to create youth who understood the ideology of the state and could transfer this ideology to the next generations as a vital role for its existence.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Yahya Akyuz, *Türk Eğitim Tarihi [History of Turkish Education]*, (Istanbul: Alfa Yayinlari, 1999), 276-280. Sadi Borak and Utkan Kocaturk, *Ataturk’un Soylev ve Demecleri II [Speeches and Declarations of Ataturk II]*, (Ankara: Ankara Universitesi Basimevi, 1972), 178.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Ibrahim Kaya, *Social Theory and Later Modernities: The Turkish Experience*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2004), 66.

Kemalist historiography emphasizes the ideological importance of Kemalist education in many ways. Nilufer Gursoy summarizes the aims of Kemalist education as: “national education is the most important means to create a modern society.” Moreover, Gursoy points out that the duty of education is to imbue the next generations with the values of the Turkish revolution. The basic mission of national education is to keep the state alive; the political mission of the national education is to create loyal citizens for the state; the social mission of education is to create people who are compatible with society; and the economic mission of education is to create the best producers and consumers in the society.¹⁰⁰⁹ Serafettin Turan stresses this Kemalist notion in education as the Kemalist regime aimed to create a youth liberated from superstitions derived from the past. This youth should love the hard sciences and the fine arts. They had to be free in their thoughts, conscience, knowledge, and culture. This youth should understand the ideology of the state and should transfer this ideology to the next generations. They had to be consciously republican, democrat, and secular. They had to improve not only their thought but also their psychical education.¹⁰¹⁰

Nationalist and secular education was the main goal for the Kemalist regime in 1920s and 1930s. The Kemalist discourse indicates the necessity of a secular education system in Turkey because of the backwardness of Eastern societies based on a theocratic notion of education.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Nilufer Gursoy, “Ataturk ve Egitim” [Ataturk and Education], in *Ataturk, Egitim ve Turkiye’nin Cagdaslasmasi Semineri* [The Seminar of Ataturk, Education, and Modernization of Turkey], (Bursa: Uludag Universitesi Basimevi, 1982), 2.

¹⁰¹⁰ Serafettin Turan, “Cagdaslasmada Egitimin Yeri” [The Place of Education in the Modernization], in *Ataturk, Egitim ve Turkiye’nin Cagdaslasmasi Semineri* [The Seminar of Ataturk, Education, and Modernization of Turkey], (Bursa: Uludag Universitesi Basimevi, 1982), 9.

Therefore, Mustafa Kemal wanted to create secular education in Turkey.¹⁰¹¹ However, the ideologic approach of Kemalist regime in education hindered successes in this area.

4.1 Education in the Ottoman Empire

The Kemalist regime inherited a reform mentality in education from its predecessors. Therefore, it is necessary to scrutinize Ottoman education and the reform attempts for a better understanding of Kemalist reforms. Education was basically of a religious nature during the classical age of the Ottoman Empire. The core of this education was memorizing the Quran and learning basic Islamic precepts. The main institution for this Islamic education was the madrasa. The first Ottoman madrasa was established in Iznik in 1331. These madrasas had a number of different branches of study, such as calligraphic sciences, oral sciences, and intellectual sciences, though they primarily served as an Islamic center for spiritual learning. Halil Inalcik points out this reality as "the goal of all knowledge and in particular, of the spiritual sciences is knowledge of God."¹⁰¹² The madrasa education reached a state of maturity during the reign of Suleyman I. However, during the socio-economic deterioration of the empire from the late sixteenth century onward, religious education was affected also.¹⁰¹³ Therefore, at the end of the eighteenth century, Ottoman statesmen were looking for a change in the educational system.

The first stirrings of educational reform appeared in the Ottoman Empire in the latter part of the eighteenth century. In particular, the Ottoman Empire's need to adopt European technology and science for its army and administration enabled the establishment of military engineering schools at this period. Beyond these engineering schools, the first military medical school was

¹⁰¹¹ Ergun Aybars, *Ataturkculuk ve Modernlesme [Ataturkism and Modernism]*, (Izmir: Ercan Kitabevi, 2000), 263.

¹⁰¹² Inalcik, *The Ottoman Empire*, 165.

¹⁰¹³ Somel, *Historical Dictionary*, 178. Inalcik, *The Ottoman Empire*, 165- 166.

founded in 1827, during the sultanate of Mahmud II (1808- 1839). These schools became the first institutions of higher education where natural sciences were taught.¹⁰¹⁴

After the sultanate of Mahmud II, educational reform progressed at an accelerated pace in the Tanzimat Era (1839- 1876). One of the major steps in this period was the Hatt-i Humayun (Imperial Edict) of 1845. In March 1845, the Sublime Porte appointed a committee to investigate existing schools and prepare places for new ones. The Committee proposed establishing an Ottoman University, a system of primary and secondary education, and a permanent Council of Public Instruction in August 1846. The Council of Public Instruction was created immediately, and in 1857 became a Ministry. A turning point in educational modernization was the Regulation of Public Education in 1869, by which primary, secondary, and higher education were integrated into a single institutional framework.¹⁰¹⁵

One of the major attempt in education was the establishment of the Mekteb-i Mulkiye (The School of the Civil Service) in the Tanzimat Era. This institution, a training center for civil servants, was founded in Istanbul in 1859. Beyond Mulkiye, in September 1868, influenced by the French Lycée model, a school was established under the name "Lycée Impérial Ottoman de Galata-Sérai" (Galatasaray Mekteb-i Sultanisi). In this school the language of instruction was French and a serious attempt was made to give a modern and Western curriculum of secondary education. According to Bernard Lewis, "the Galatasaray School was the first serious attempt by a Muslim government to provide modern education at secondary level in a Western language. Another new

¹⁰¹⁴ Michael Winter, "The Modernization of Education in Kemalist Turkey", in *Ataturk and Modernization of Turkey*, ed. Jacob M. Landau, (Leiden: Brill, 1984), 183. Somel, *Historical Dictionary*, 80-81.

¹⁰¹⁵ Berkes, *Development of Secularism*, 173. Lewis, *The Emergence*, 111-112. Somel, *Historical Dictionary*, 81. Winter, "The Modernization of Education in Kemalist Turkey," 183.

feature was the teaching of Muslim and Christian pupils side by side- a step towards religious de-segregation.”¹⁰¹⁶

The expansion of modern education in the capital city and the provinces accelerated after 1880, during the sultanate of Abdulhamid II. The most impressive achievement was in higher education, where the number of schools and the number of students both considerably increased in the Hamidian regime. To the existing schools, Abdulhamid added no less than eighteen new higher and professional schools. The School of the Civil Service became an institution of higher education in 1877. The most important event in education was the founding of a Turkish university. After unsuccessful attempts in 1847 and in 1866-71, the university (Darulfunun) was founded in August 1900.¹⁰¹⁷

In the last ten years of the Ottoman Empire (1908-1918), the Second Constitutional period, “pedagogical thought flourished, emphasizing ‘terbiye’ (education) rather than the traditional concept of ‘maarif’ (knowledge).” One of the most important event in this period was Provisional Law of Elementary Education of 1913, the most important piece of legislation in the field since 1869. By the help of this legislation, control of primary schools was taken away from the ulema, who had administered them through the evkaf (pious charitable trusts), and given to the Ministry of Education for the first time.¹⁰¹⁸

4.2 Kemalist Regime and its Educational Policies between 1919 and 1923

During the Turkish War of Independence, the school system was chaotic, uncoordinated and highly fragmented. Beyond that there was a dichotomy between secular and religious

¹⁰¹⁶ Lewis, *The Emergence*, 120.

¹⁰¹⁷ Lewis, *The Emergence*, 177-178. Winter, “*The Modernization of Education in Kemalist Turkey*”, 183. Somel, *Historical Dictionary*, 81.

¹⁰¹⁸ Winter, “*The Modernization of Education in Kemalist Turkey*,” 183- 184.

education.¹⁰¹⁹ While the modernization of the school system was one of the most important Kemalist reforms after 1924, the Kemalist attitude was in its early stages traditionalist, not secular. The Grand National Assembly saw education in mostly religious during the war years. Looking at debates in the Assembly expands this understanding beyond the existing literature by showing that how conservative the Kemalist attitude was. When conservative deputies tried to convince the Assembly of the importance of religion and religious education, Kemalist leaders agreed with them. As an example, Hamdullah Suphi Bey, the pro-Kemalist Minister of Education, thought that the core of education was to protect religious traditions in 1921. Dichotomy in education was not seen as a problem by Kemalist deputies. The Kemalist majority was instead in favor of the combination of traditional religious schools and modern schools. The Darulhilafe Madrasas (reformed madrasas) were seen as a remedy for educational problems by the Kemalist deputies. While the Kemalist deputies were in favor of Darulhilafe Madrasas and religious schools, Huseyin Avni Bey, leader of the Second Group, was totally against them. The Assembly debates proves that Huseyin Avni Bey, later condemned as a reactionary by the Kemalist regime, was again a vanguard in the unification of education in a modern way before the Kemalists achieved that goal in 1924. The parliamentary debates prove that the problem of education was one of the main concerns of the Ankara Government. Beyond that, these debates show that both Kemalists and their opponents paid importance to the value of education at an early stage of the Assembly.

The problems of education were discussed in the Assembly just a few days after its inauguration. Conservative deputies tried to convince the Assembly of the importance of religion and religious education. Hafiz Ibrahim Bey, deputy of Isparta, was in favor of the religious education. According to him, the elementary school system and religious education in school

¹⁰¹⁹ Winter, *"The Modernization of Education in Kemalist Turkey,"* 185- 192.

should be approved by the Commission of Sharia, connected to the Minister of Sharia and Pious Foundation. He said “Religion is never the barrier of progress. Islam is the most important servant of scientific progress today.”¹⁰²⁰ Hafiz Ibrahim Bey’s speech summarized the general thought of the conservative deputies in the Assembly. They were also aware of the backwardness of the society. They believed that scientific progress could not be thought without religion; therefore, they tried to combine science and religion.

Moreover, Hafiz Ibrahim Bey underlined that the public educational system should be aligned with religion. Religion was accepted as the savior of Ottoman people – in this case Ottoman Muslims- which rescued the Muslims from the miserable debaucheries of Europe. Therefore, not only the social life and traditions of the Muslim society should be organized by religion but education also. Therefore, education and instruction should be combined with the religious matters. Hafiz Ibrahim Bey was sure about that education would be improved by this unification.¹⁰²¹

The Kemalist authorities had no firm policies about the secularization of education in April 1920. Hamdullah Suphi Bey, deputy of Antalya and later Minister of Education in December 1920, argued that religious scholars had boundless rights to demand a religious education for the next generation. This demand could not be rejected by anyone. There was religious education in every nation. Turkish children could and should get this religious education and this principle was general and unconditional. After mentioning the importance of religious education, Hamdullah Suphi Bey tried to outline different branches of education in Turkey resembling the rest of the world. He emphasized that courses, such as chemistry and agriculture, related to worldly affairs,

¹⁰²⁰ *TBMM ZC*, 26 Apr. 1920, v. 1, 75.

¹⁰²¹ *TBMM ZC*, 26 Apr. 1920, v. 1, 76.

should be differentiated from religious subjects. Therefore, Hamdullah Suphi Bey suggested not intertwining these branches and instead the separation of the two spheres. Hamdullah Suphi Bey advised the Commission of Sharia to give suggestions to the Commission of Education, which would devise the educational program for children.¹⁰²² This statement suggest Kemalist cadre did not have an exact program to secularize the educational system at the beginning. Their agenda was mostly to separate but not eliminate the religious courses from the education in 1920. As mentioned in the first chapter, the Kemalists appeared loyal to the Sultanate and Caliphate at that time because of their lack of power to control the state totally. Their attitude to educational change would become more radical after the abolition of the Office of Caliphate in March 1924.

The separation of religious and secular education was not very welcomed by some conservative deputies. These deputies supported unifying education within the state. Mustafa Taki Efendi, deputy of Sivas, asserted that the Ottomans' deprivation of progress was because of thinking of religion and world affairs separately. He pointed out that Islam was not an obstacle to the material progress, like other religions. Mustafa Taki Efendi underlined the misunderstandings between students of science schools and religious schools. According to him, the students of science schools were considered strangers and unbelievers by traditional school students. On the other hand, students who studied science in the schools considered the students of madrasah, Moslem theological schools, as bigoted and useless. This situation caused dissidence in the public opinion. Mustafa Taki Efendi advised unifying religious and secular schools for the sake of the state.¹⁰²³ This suggestion to unify the school system in Turkey came well before Kemalists managed it. While conservatives sought a combination of science and religion in a unified school

¹⁰²² *TBMM ZC*, 26 Apr. 1920, v. 1, 77.

¹⁰²³ *TBMM ZC*, 26 Apr. 1920, v. 1, 77.

system in 1920, the Kemalist system rejected this combination after the unification of education became possible in March 1924. The Kemalist approach was more radical, rejecting religious education and eradicating it step by step after March 1924.

The first Government of the Grand National Assembly was formed on May 3, 1920. On May 9, 1920, the Government's program on education was: "...our goal in education is to render a national and religious education to our children properly."¹⁰²⁴ From this perspective, it can be said that the religious education was still important for the Kemalist Government. Moreover, the Kemalist Government was initially in favor of an 'Islamic nation'. On May 1, 1920, Mustafa Kemal described the Assembly as not consisting of only Turks but of a unity of Turks, Kurds, Circassians, and Lazs.¹⁰²⁵

The conservative deputies of the Assembly were as eager as Kemalist majority to make some progress in education in 1920. These conservative deputies believed that education could remedy the problems of Anatolian people. As an example, Hacı Suleyman Efendi, deputy of Izmir and former muderris¹⁰²⁶ of Nazilli madrasa, thought: "...nowadays establishing very small schools in villages is better than establishing very big mosques in cities." Moreover, Hacı Suleyman Efendi was aware of the importance of the girls' education for the future of society. He thought that the education of girls more important than the education of boys because of its importance in terms of motherhood. According to him, a mother could teach her child at least seven years, so women should be equipped by education for a better society.¹⁰²⁷

¹⁰²⁴ *TBMM ZC*, 9 May 1920, v. 1, 241.

¹⁰²⁵ *TBMM ZC*, 1 May 1920, v. 1, 165.

¹⁰²⁶ Chief instructor and administrator of a madrasa. The muderris, the chief figure in Islamic higher education, was expected to be a recognized authority in religious and other sciences. Somel, *Historical Dictionary*, 205.

¹⁰²⁷ *TBMM ZC*, 22 May 1920, v. 2, 7.

In the early period of 1921, conservative deputies of the Assembly raised their concerns over religious education. Hacı Atif Bey, deputy of Ankara and one of the former muderris in Ankara madrasa, portrayed education in Turkey as Islamic education. At the same time, as a religious scholar he was in favor of sciences supported by the Government. However, the Islamic traditions were not valued by some scholars in these high schools, especially Ankara High School. Religious studies were seen as useless by these scholars and the directors, but, the generation taught by these scholars could emulate them if they were obedient to the Islamic traditions. Hacı Atif Bey warned Hamdullah Suphi Bey, the Minister of Education in December 1920, that this disregard caused some popular dissatisfaction. Therefore, these directors and scholars should obey the Islamic traditions such as praying and fasting.¹⁰²⁸

Hamdullah Suphi Bey, the pro-Kemalist Minister of Education, shared the concerns of Hacı Atif Bey. He also realized that religious education was neglected by some educators. However, because of the end of the semester, Hamdullah Suphi Bey did not want to change the places of these instructors. He promised to appoint instructors who were eligible to teach religion to fulfill the desire for religious education. Hamdullah Suphi Bey explained himself by giving an example in this subject. When he was conversing with a young teacher who was complaining about the lack of people's support in education in Anatolia, another person joined their discussion. That person warned Hamdullah Suphi Bey that if the problems of education were to be solved, the children should be bonded to their family, traditions, and past. That person believed "if these students are alien and not appreciative of their state and people after their education, this style of education will not be approved by Anatolian people." Hamdullah Suphi Bey underlined this concern as the soul of education in Turkey. He pointed out that he would follow a policy which

¹⁰²⁸ *TBMM ZC*, 10 Feb. 1921, v. 8, 166-167.

would aim to make children loyal to their past and turn them into their nation's roots. Moreover, Hamdullah Suphi Bey wanted more efforts from the Ministry of Sharia to educate instructors to make their pupils love their religion and past. These efforts would protect the students' conscience from the negative effects of Western tendencies.¹⁰²⁹ Notably, while Hamdullah Suphi Bey was a staunch Kemalist, he had a very conservative attitude towards education in 1921. He thought that the core of education was to protect religious traditions. This situation was related to the political power of the Kemalist group. In 1921, Islam was still very important among the Anatolian people and Kemalists had an unclear secular and nationalist program in education in that year. However, this attitude would change in a few years later after they controlled the state totally.

The Kemalist Government started to organize a congress to find solutions for the problems of education in mid-1921. This education congress was held on July 15, 1921 with the participation of more than 250 educators. Even though the difficulties of the War of Independence were continuing, the Ankara Government was looking for remedies for the educational problems.¹⁰³⁰ In the opening speech of this congress, Mustafa Kemal emphasized the gathering as “a congress of knowledge and culture of learning” (ilim ve irfan kongresi). Moreover, he suggested that faulty educational principles had led to the nation's decline and Turkey needed a culture of learning conducive to the development of an improved intelligence of its people.¹⁰³¹

Mustafa Kemal criticized the previous educational methods and condemned them for the backwardness of the Ottoman society. Besides, Mustafa Kemal advised educators to inspire the next generation to struggle against foreign elements, both Western and Eastern, which were

¹⁰²⁹ *TBMM ZC*, 10 Feb. 1921, v. 8, 170.

¹⁰³⁰ Hilmi Yavuz, *Modernleşme, Oryantalizm ve İslam [Modernism, Orientalism, and Islam]*, (İstanbul: Boyut Kitapları, 1998), 156.

¹⁰³¹ Gawrych, *Young Atatürk*, 145-146.

interfering with their existence, rights, and unity. The Kemalist ideological approach which charged teachers with being the ideologists of the regime was mentioned the first time in this congress. Mustafa Kemal described educators as the honorable vanguards of future salvation.¹⁰³² According to Gawrych “by holding the congress, Mustafa Kemal prepared teachers for the central role that education would have in postwar Turkey.”¹⁰³³ Preparing the programs of elementary and secondary schools and training teachers for the village schools were discussed and accepted in the Congress. However, these programs could not be implemented because of the difficulties of the War. The mixed structure, female educators participated into the congress alongside male educators, of the Congress was criticized harshly by the conservative deputies.¹⁰³⁴

At the end of 1921, the conservative deputies spoke up in the Assembly because of the mistakes of Hamdullah Suphi Bey, the Minister of Education. They asked the Assembly to force the Minister to resign from office. Hasan Basri Bey, deputy of Karesi, expressed the conservatives’ thoughts about education. According to him, education was the soul of the country, moreover the base of the national existence. He asserted that education was in crisis and there was a great deal of confusions over educational affairs. He criticized the modernists for their policy of Western education. According to him education was a kind of factory which produced people who were alien to their nation’s soul because of Western education established on a foreign basis. He thought that Western style education was harmful for the state. Because of this style of education, which caused friction between the people and the state, ignorance increased. People’s interest in education diminished in intensity because of this. Hasan Basri Bey attacked the policies of the

¹⁰³² Akyuz, *Türk Eğitim Tarihi*, 276-280.

¹⁰³³ Gawrych, *Young Atatürk*, 146.

¹⁰³⁴ Ali Turer, *Türk Eğitim Tarihi [History of Turkish Education]*, (Ankara: Detay yayıncılık, 2011), 287.

Kemalist Government in education as not establishing an educational system proper for popular traditions and feelings. Because of these mistakes, materialistic and spiritual collapse increased from day to day.¹⁰³⁵ In the conservative mentality ‘people’ still had an Ottoman meaning of an ‘Islamic millet system.’ Therefore when they talked about the people, it related to Muslims, such as Turks, Kurds, Bosnians, Albanians, living in Anatolia. Moreover, the Kemalist regime did not have a clear Turkist agenda at that time. Their Turkish approach became more apparent after the Turkish War of Independence was won.

Conservatives described the Kemalist tendency of making reforms in education as destroying the morality and spirit of people under the guise of making a social revolution. Hasan Basri Bey emphasized that modernists wanted to dismiss the religious education from schools under the guise of modernizing the school system. They made some reforms, such as changing prayer rooms to ballrooms in schools. Educators who regarded religious education as unimportant were promoted by the Ministry. Hasan Basri Bey enumerated the proper goals of the Grand National Assembly in education. These included strengthening the spirit of the people by education which was proper to the soul of the nation; improving instruction; removing popular resistance to education; giving children proper religious education; and giving a healthy direction to education which would produce people who were strong in material and spiritual thoughts. Hasan Basri Bey asked the Assembly which goals had been achieved by this Government. Moreover, he criticized the Minister for gathering the Congress in a mixed structure, which was an attitude even the Istanbul Government could not dare to do. According to Hasan Basri Bey, the Government’s acts made people resentful and their hatred towards schools became stronger after that Congress. All

¹⁰³⁵ *TBMM ZC*, 12 Nov. 1921, v.14, 190- 191.

this resulted in the resignation of Hamdullah Suphi Bey, the Minister of Education.¹⁰³⁶ Hasan Basri Bey's speech is very important to understanding the general situation in the Assembly at the end of 1921. The traditionalist point of view towards education was very strong among deputies in the Assembly. The Kemalists had no clear plan for systematic change in education. They had made some weak attempts, but, the Assembly showed strong resistance, meaning the Kemalist Minister was forced to leave his post. Mehmet Vehbi Bey was appointed as the new Minister of Education on November 20, 1921, after the resignation of Hamdullah Suphi Bey. He held the office until November 1922.

In the opening ceremony of the Assembly in March 1922, Mustafa Kemal emphasized the importance of education from a traditional perspective. There was no sign in his speech about the secularization of education. He pointed out that educational affairs were the most important duties of the Government. A program, appropriate for the conditions of state and people and not contradicted by the necessities of modernity, would be prepared soon.¹⁰³⁷ Mustafa Kemal underlined the experiences of the Ottoman governments which showed their desire in education. However, Mustafa Kemal criticized those experiences as imitating the West and East. Therefore, these experiences resulted as failure to save people from ignorance. Mustafa Kemal showed a populist approach in education in this speech, in accord with his populist program of 1921.¹⁰³⁸ He suggested that the essential owner of the state was the peasant, therefore, the main goal of the Government in education was to eliminate illiteracy among peasants; to teach them some

¹⁰³⁶ *TBMM ZC*, 12 Nov. 1921, v.14, 192- 202.

¹⁰³⁷ *TBMM ZC*, 1 Mar. 1922, v.18, 7.

¹⁰³⁸ The Populist declaration (*Halkçılık Beyannamesi*), which was accepted by the Grand National Assembly in November 1920, was a Kemalist initiative. According to this declaration, the Ankara Government considered to establish new institutions for the benefit of Turkish people.

knowledge about history and geography which introduced them their homeland, religion, and world; and finally to teach them the four basic arithmetical operations.¹⁰³⁹ In this speech, Mustafa Kemal had a more populist and traditional approach in education than a secular one. He had not managed to get full powers in his hands at that time. Therefore, there was no clear sign of secularization in March 1922.

While there was not any Kemalist secularization in education in 1922, conservative deputies still complained about some reformist educators. In particular, the Association of Teachers, which was established in May 1921, attracted the wrath of conservative deputies in August 1922. This Association was the vanguard of organizing the first Congress of Education in July 1921. The Association published a manifesto in *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, the Kemalist newspaper published in Ankara, on June 26, 1922. The Association summarized some of main revolutions in Europe and the establishment of a new life (*yeni hayat*) in these societies in twentieth century. Besides, it supported Mustafa Kemal's policy that the essential owner of the state was the peasant.¹⁰⁴⁰ Ismail Sukru Efendi, deputy of Karahisar-i Sahib and one of the prominent figures among conservatives in the Assembly asked a parliamentary question on July 1, 1922. In his resolution Ismail Sukru Efendi condemned this manifesto as a political instead of an objective intervention in educational affairs. The attitude of the Association towards to the revolutions in Germany and Russia was sympathetic. According to the Association, these revolutions had healthy consequences for their societies. Ismail Sukru Bey underlined the invitation of the Association to encourage educators to organize a movement to fight against so-called wrong and superstitious

¹⁰³⁹ *TBMM ZC*, 1 Mar. 1922, v.18, 8.

¹⁰⁴⁰ "Turkiye Muallime ve Muallimlerine Beyanname" [Manifesto to the Teachers of Turkey], *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, 26 Jun. 1922, 2.

beliefs to create a modern society in accord with twentieth century notions. Ismail Sukru Bey emphasized that this manifesto did not mention Islam even a single time; instead, it hailed political figures such as Karl Marx, and ideologies such as Socialism and Bolshevism. According to Ismail Sukru Bey, the Association's manifesto caused much disaffection among teachers and the rest of the people. Ata Bey, Minister of Interior, replied this parliamentary question on August 14, 1922. According to the Minister, the manifesto was not political. Moreover, the board of directors of this Association was included some Kemalist deputies and teachers. All these members had legal qualifications for membership.¹⁰⁴¹

Even though there were some reform attempts in education by some Kemalist deputies, the majority of them still were in favor of the combination of traditional religious schools and modern schools. Mazhar Mufid Bey, one of the closest deputies to Mustafa Kemal, advocated religious education in a modern way. According to him, everybody wanted learning and science. Referring to the Prophet Muhammad's quote, "Seek knowledge even in China because acquiring knowledge is obligatory for every Muslim", Mazhar Mufid Bey underlined that Islam was a religion which accepted reason and the Sharia was in accord with modern sciences. Due to the lack of schools and teachers in the villages, Mazhar Mufid Bey emphasized imams, local religious leaders, muderris, and clergymen, who were important to educating peasants in the villages. According to him, if those imams and other religious people could be educated in the Darulhilafe Madrasa, they could be very helpful for educating the peasants. The imams, caring for the souls of the villagers, would be very helpful to increase the light of education in rural areas. He underlined a very important detail in his speech also. He said that people were listening to imams (prayer leaders) more than educated people, therefore, if those imams could be educated by modern schools, they

¹⁰⁴¹ *TBMM ZC*, 14 Aug.1922, v.22, 162- 163.

could convince the peasants easily. According to Mazhar Mufid Bey, Turkey needed Darulhilafe Madrasas, in where both Sharia learning and modern basic sciences were taught together.¹⁰⁴² This speech proves that Kemalists had no clear secular notion in education at this time. They were aware of the importance of religion and religious leaders in the rural areas. After this speech some MPs wanted to establish Darulhilafe Madrasas in cities. As an example Resul Bey, deputy of Bitlis, gave a proposal to the Assembly to establish the Darulhilafe Madrasa in Bitlis. Another example was the initiative of Yusuf Bey, deputy of Denizli, for establishing a madrasa in Denizli.¹⁰⁴³

Beyond this speech, it is clear that the Ankara Government was so eager to establish and support local madrasas. In many Anatolian cities, local religious schools were established by the government. In Tarakli in Hendek, in Adapazari, and in Ula new medreses started their education with the support of the Kemalist government. Moreover, the Minister of Sharia in the Ankara Government sent a circular letter to local administrations to establish madrasas and sustain them.¹⁰⁴⁴ These documents prove that the Ankara Government had no problem with the traditional religious schools during the Independence War. This support continued after the war was won.

While the Kemalist deputies were in favor of Darulhilafe Madrasas and religious schools, Huseyin Avni Bey, the leader of the Second Group, was totally against them. Huseyin Avni Bey clearly condemned the dichotomy in the educational system. According to him, the programs of schools were erroneous, and the Darulhilafe Madrasas and the other schools were deficient. The

¹⁰⁴² *TBMM ZC*, 22 Aug. 1922, v.22, 402-403.

¹⁰⁴³ *BCA*, 5 Dec. 1923, Folder no: 6215, Document no: 6.33.14. *BCA*, 1 Jan. 1924, Folder no: 6254, Document no: 6.34.32.

¹⁰⁴⁴ *BCA*, 1 Jan. 1921, Folder no: 51.0.0.0, Document no: 7.63.1. *BCA*, 3 Dec. 1921, Folder no: 51.0.0.0, Document no: 7.63.4. *BCA*, 3 Apr. 1922, Folder no: 51.0.0.0, Document no: 7.63.28. *BCA*, 23 Feb. 1922, Folder no: 51.0.0.0, Document no: 7.63.20. *BCA*, 31 Dec. 1922, Folder no: 51.0.0.0, Document no: 2.1.13. *BCA*, 19 Feb. 1923, Folder no: 51.0.0.0, Document no: 7.64.67. *BCA*, 13 Sep. 1922, Folder no: 51.0.0.0, Document no: 13.113.55.

discord between these two different schools caused many problems. Huseyin Avni Bey declared that these madrasas were not modern schools.¹⁰⁴⁵ Huseyin Avni Bey, who was later condemned as a reactionary by the Kemalist regime, was again a vanguard in the unification of education. The Kemalist Government managed this unification in March 1924 after the collapse of the Office of Caliphate.

Conservative deputies opposed Huseyin Avni Bey and advocated the importance of madrasas. Mustafa Taki Efendi condemned the Tanzimat Era for the dichotomy in the educational system in the Ottoman Empire. Before the Tanzimat, there was no division in the Ottoman educational structure. Mustafa Taki Efendi mentioned that the Ottoman Government was threatened to force educational reform by the European powers. The modern school system became a challenge to the classical madrasa system. These modern schools became the centers of the European theories, philosophies, and customs. Mustafa Taki Efendi attacked religious scholars who accepted Western thought which saw Islam as an obstacle on the way of reformation. He once more underlined that Islam was not against scientific progress. Vehbi Efendi, deputy of Konya, opposed Huseyin Avni Bey's condemnation of madrasas. He believed that the madrasas had never been a source of sedition. They were always places of improvement and never been a source of discord.¹⁰⁴⁶ Traditional and religious schools were advocated by both Kemalist and conservative deputies in August 1922. Huseyin Avni Bey was one of the few deputies to attack to the dichotomy in education in Turkey. His thoughts were more radical than the Kemalist modernizers at that time. However, he and his allies were expelled from the Grand National Assembly when the first period

¹⁰⁴⁵ *TBMM ZC*, 30 Aug. 1922, v.22, 424.

¹⁰⁴⁶ *TBMM ZC*, 30 Aug. 1922, v.22, 425- 428.

was over in April 1923. On the other hand, the Kemalists adopted this dichotomy in their nine principles, their program for the coming election in June 1923.

The second term of the Grand National Assembly was inaugurated on August 11, 1923, and it functioned like a single party regime.¹⁰⁴⁷ Education policies from August 1923 to March 1924 were still not radical at this period. It could be said that the Kemalist regime was looking to remove the political actors of the old regime first and then to modernize education ideologically. The Office of Caliphate was still in existence in this transition period, therefore it had to be abolished first and then Kemalist ideological change in education would be possible. These changes in education became possible in March 1924 once the Office of Caliphate was abolished. The new and fifth Government of the Grand National Assembly was formed on August 14, 1923. The Government program was read on September 5, 1923 in the Assembly. In the program, the Government decided the educational policies would be based on unity in public and vocational education. The duties of the Government in education were the education of children, education of the people, and cultivating excellent people who had a nationalist mentality. The education of children would be provided by modern schools. Night courses and apprentice schools would be established for popular education. Talented students whose families could not afford to send them to schools would be supported by the Government for their higher education. Moreover, the Government would send them to Europe for specialized training. The development of every degree of education, equality of opportunity, physical training and scouting, compulsory elementary education, and giving opportunities to girls equal to boys would be the goals of Ali Fethi Bey's Government.¹⁰⁴⁸ *The New York Times* highlighted this educational policy as a new

¹⁰⁴⁷ Tamkoc, *The Warrior Diplomats*, 91.

¹⁰⁴⁸ *TBMM ZC*, 5 Sep. 1923, v.1, 423-424.

program for development of Turkish nation in education. The newspaper particularly mentioned scouting as a means for the government to increase pupils' physical development.¹⁰⁴⁹

As it mentioned above, the second period of the Grand National Assembly was a single party regime from the beginning. Friction within the Kemalist party started after the establishment of the Republic which was seen as a coup d'état by Kemal's opponents in the People's Party. Some individuals like Rauf Bey and Kazim Karabekir Pasha were relatively more gradualist in their approach to many questions of modernization and political change.¹⁰⁵⁰ The radical wing of the Kemalist Party winning a majority during the crisis of the establishment of the Republic. This radical wing had also its educational agenda in the secularization of education in Turkey. This agenda was mostly ideological rather than systematic or rational. The next section will discuss the ideological aims of Kemalist educational policies and their deficiencies during the unification of education in March 1924 and afterwards.

4.3 Law for the Unification of Education in March 1924 and Afterwards

It is a fact that the Kemalist regime had no objection to the Ottoman educational system during the Turkish War of Independence. Moreover, there were many deputies who were educated in the traditional religious schools, madrasas, in the Assembly. As mentioned in the previous section, the Kemalist deputies agreed about the importance of the religious education with the conservative deputies. When a significant number of conservative deputies lost their seats after the elections controlled by the Kemalist Government in June and July 1923, the Kemalist majority strengthened its power within the state. In the second period of the Assembly, the Kemalist majority planned to destroy the Office of Caliphate, to abolish the Ministry of Sharia, and to unite

¹⁰⁴⁹ "Boy Scouts Figure in Turkish Reform", the *New York Times*, 7 Oct.1923, XX6.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Shissler, *Between Two Empires*, 187.

the educational system on the same day, March 3, 1924. According to Hasan Kayali: "...when the caliphate was abolished and the Ottoman house once and for all dislodged, Mustafa Kemal turned to the task of unification. The law for the unification of education became the linchpin of the cultural program of the new Turkey."¹⁰⁵¹

The Law for the Unification of Education in March 1924 was an important step in the secularization of education in Turkey. By the help of this law, the republican government put all schools under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education.¹⁰⁵² The Kemalist regime believed that traditional religious schools could not coexist with modern schools and therefore, this dichotomy in education should be removed. Hasan Kayali pointed out the effects of this bifurcation in every aspect of the Ottoman Empire: "The law for the unification of education was emblematic of the spirit of Kemalist reforms. Since the beginning of the Tanzimat, new institutions had continued to exist side by side with traditional ones, even as the former circumscribed the reach and scope of the older institutions. Western legal systems, secular schools, and dress had not entirely replaced existing ones. Mustafa Kemal's brief experiment with separating the office of the caliphate from the sultanate was consistent with such bifurcation."¹⁰⁵³

These changes would be implemented after a strong leadership took control of the state. As mentioned in the first chapter, the political power of Mustafa Kemal enabled him to take significant steps in education and culture. Henry Rutz and Erol Balkan indicate the importance of the strong leadership in a radical change as: "The instrument of power was the 1924 Law of

¹⁰⁵¹ Hasan Kayali, "The Struggle for Independence," in *The Cambridge History of Turkey v.4: Turkey in the Modern World*, ed. Resat Kasaba, Cambridge University Press, 2008, 145.

¹⁰⁵² Zurcher, *Turkey*, 187. Winter, "The Modernization of Education in Kemalist Turkey," 185. Kalaycioglu, *Turkish Dynamics*, 57.

¹⁰⁵³ Kayali, "The Struggle for Independence," 145.

Unification of Instruction (Tevhid-i Tedrisat Kanunu) that determined ‘all education instruments are to be placed under the control of the Ministry of Education’.”¹⁰⁵⁴

The Kemalist leadership wanted to create a nationalist educational system which would be helpful for raising future generations. Michael Winter sees this ideological approach as: “The Law for the Unification of Instruction was a fundamental step in the establishment of a unified, modern, secular, egalitarian and national educational system. Its nation-building role was especially vital in a country where identity was often Islamic rather than national, and which was fragmented into numerous regional, tribal, racial and linguistic units.”¹⁰⁵⁵ The Assembly debates demonstrate this Kemalist ideological mentality in education.

While the division of the Ottoman educational system was not a problem in the first period of the Assembly, the situation changed in the second period. The Kemalists strengthened their power in politics and their efforts to change the educational structure were directly proportional to their power. The first initiative started in February 1924. During the discussion about the budget of the Government in the Assembly, Vasif Bey, deputy of Saruhan and later the Minister of Education in March 1924, started to criticize the divided system mentioning the ‘nine principles’ (the election program of People’s Party) he stressed the fifth principle of that program. Under that principle, the unification of education was declared a goal of the party. According to Vasif Bey, a Government imposed and followed a single policy to raise and educate its individuals. The Government raised a generation who were touched by the same wishes and desires by the help of a united and standard education.¹⁰⁵⁶ The next day, in the opening ceremony of the Grand National

¹⁰⁵⁴ Henry Rutz and Erol M. Balkan, *Reproducing Class: Education, Neoliberalism, and the Rise of the New Middle Class in Istanbul*, (New York: Berghahn Books, 2013), 40.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Winter, “*The Modernization of Education in Kemalist Turkey*,” 186.

¹⁰⁵⁶ *TBMM ZC*, 27 Feb. 1924, v.6, 415-416.

Assembly, Mustafa Kemal declared the importance of the unification of education. In his speech, he warned the deputies to accept the coming law immediately for the sake of the state. Any delay in the law would be harmful for the education of nation. Mustafa Kemal wanted from the deputies to show their zeal in accepting the law for the unification of education in order to realize the results of this decision.¹⁰⁵⁷

The Law for the Unification of Education was accepted by the Assembly on March 3, 1924. Because of discussions over the abolition of the Caliphate, which was accepted the same day, this proposal was accepted with neither opposition nor discussion in the Assembly. In the proposal Vasif Bey underlined the reasons for the Government's reform in education. While there is in fact no proof about the Tanzimat reformers wanted a unified educational system, Vasif Bey asserted that while the Tanzimat reformers wanted to unite education, they instead caused bifurcation. This bifurcation created many harmful results. The individuals of a society should receive a united education. The dichotomy in education would create two different types of people. This situation would violate the goals of uniting feelings and thoughts in society. Therefore, the unification of education was the best and most modern approach to promote national feelings and thoughts in a state.¹⁰⁵⁸ After the law passed in the Assembly, the traditional religious schools (madrasas) were banned and all schools in Turkey were united under the administration of Ministry of National Education.¹⁰⁵⁹

The importance of the Unification of Education was undeniable. The Assembly debates demonstrate the main Kemalist goals in this reform as removing the dichotomy of the Ottoman

¹⁰⁵⁷ *TBMM ZC*, 1 Mar. 1924, v.7, 4.

¹⁰⁵⁸ *TBMM ZC*, 3 Mar. 1924, v.7, 25.

¹⁰⁵⁹ BCA, 20 Mar. 1924, Folder no: 51.0.0.0, Document no: 2.4.8

education system, eliminating the traditional religious schools, (madrasas) as backward, and assimilating minorities under the banner of Turkification. Moreover, teachers were seen as the key instrument of an ideological transfer to the future generations. The Assembly debates shed light on this Kemalist ideological effort also.

4.3.1 Abolition of Madrasas and Opposition to the Kemalist Initiative

The closing of madrasas became a fact after the law for the Unification of Education was accepted in the Assembly on March 3, 1924. The Ulema and Sufi orders were controlled by the regime after this abolition.¹⁰⁶⁰ While the Kemalist bureaucratic reorganization was justified in terms of the necessity of “unification of education” under a national authority, the public and religious authorities still kept their hopes alive for a new arrangement of the religious schools before the law was passed in the Assembly. However, the Kemalist Minister of Education made public his decision “to close down the madrasas altogether because of their allegedly incurable backwardness and many other deficiencies.” Amit Bein emphasizes the importance of the role of Mustafa Kemal in this decision. He summarizes the fate of madrasas as: “the madrasas of the capital closed their doors for the last time on March 15, 1924, without any guarantees being given to the professors about their future employment. A centuries long tradition of learning was symbolically eliminated while in reality a merely decade-old reformed system came to an abrupt

¹⁰⁶⁰ Omer Taspinar. *Kurdish Nationalism and Political Islam in Turkey: Kemalist Identity in Transition*, (London: Routledge, 2005), 22. Winter, “*The Modernization of Education in Kemalist Turkey*,” 185. Berkes, *Development of Secularism*, 477.

end after years of great expectations, some achievements, and many struggles, frustrations, and dashed hopes.”¹⁰⁶¹

After the decision of the Kemalist government, all madrasas, 479 in number with a total enrollment of 18,000, were closed down. The Kemalist Government placed religious secondary education under the Ministry of Education in Ankara, which organized a relatively small number of schools for mosque liturgists and prayer leaders after the Law of the Unification of Education was accepted in the Grand National Assembly.¹⁰⁶² The Ministry of Education sent a circular letter to local administrations about the new law which they should take into consideration. The Ministry sent an ordinance to the local administrators as what kind of principles they had to obey in the schools.¹⁰⁶³

This initiative was another Kemalist ideological approach to the religious institutions. The main goal of this Kemalist act was to control religion and religious institutions instead of removing them from the public sphere. Michael Winter sees this ideological aim as: “the official Kemalist attitude was that religious instruction should be given privately at home and not in school, but the authorities acted cautiously. Religious lessons were not immediately dropped from the curriculum but rather phased out. At first they continued on a voluntary basis; then they were discontinued in the middle (orta) or junior high schools, and later in the secondary (lise) schools. In 1932, religious instruction was withdrawn from the curriculum of the primary schools as well.”¹⁰⁶⁴

¹⁰⁶¹ Amit Bein, *Ottoman Ulema, Turkish Republic: Agents of Change and Guardians of Tradition*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 73.

¹⁰⁶² Howard, *History of Turkey*, 93.

¹⁰⁶³ BCA, 15 Mar. 1924, Folder no: 51.0.0.0, Document no: 2.1.31. BCA, 23 Mar. 1924, Folder no: 51.0.0.0, Document no:3.27.1

¹⁰⁶⁴ Winter, “*The Modernization of Education in Kemalist Turkey*,” 187.

Ersin Kalaycioglu emphasizes the ideological approach of the Kemalist regime: “The republican government took another radical decision and put all schools under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of National Education in 1924. However, eventually the practice of providing some students religious education, while educating the rest in secular, scientific education, and instilling a nationalist creed in the minds and hearts of both groups of students seemed not to be feasible. Hence, the government adopted a policy of mainly educating the students in science, arts and humanities compatible with the nationalist creed of the regime, and permit religious instruction as much as feasible under the circumstances. Religious institutions diminished in numbers and the number of students instructed in religion also diminished sharply in the 1920s and the 1930s.”¹⁰⁶⁵

The Kemalist Government wanted to replace religious schools with Imam-Hatip Schools and the Faculty of Theology.¹⁰⁶⁶ Some of the ex-Darulhile Medrese’s pupils were ranked as graduated from Imam-Hatip schools and they were assigned as imams in cities and rural areas. The Kemalist regime tried to train modernized imams, whom should be equipped with the modern sciences, in these schools. However, these Imam-Hatip schools would not be enough to meet needs for the next few years. Moreover, the Kemalist regime had no real desire to continue any religious education. As an example, the Government did not allow a hafiz school in Konya even though this school was suggested by the Directorate of Religious Affairs.¹⁰⁶⁷

Michael Winter describes the reluctance of the Kemalist regime to continue the religious education as: “Article 4 of the Law for the Unification of Instruction provided for the establishment of special schools to train religious functionaries, since the madrasas were about to be closed down.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Kalaycioglu, *Turkish Dynamics*, 57.

¹⁰⁶⁶ *TBMM ZC*, 3 Mar. 1924, v.7, 26. Zurcher, *Turkey*, 187.

¹⁰⁶⁷ BCA, 18 Oct. 1924, Folder no: 51.0.0.0, Document no: 5.43.11. BCA, 28 May 1926, Folder no: 22923, Document no: 192.314.4. BCA, 22 Jul. 1925, Folder no: 2216, Document no: 26.149.16.

In September 1924, 26 such schools were opened. Their principals had no special religious training; they were experienced educators, imbued with the goal of turning out enlightened men of religion who would be loyal to the Republic. Most of the teaching hours were devoted to the sciences and French, with religious subjects such as Koran and Hadith relegated to a secondary position. Arabic was not taught at all. This strange curriculum did not attract many students; in any case, the prevailing anti-religious atmosphere would not have encouraged the institutes to develop. Enrollment quickly declined, and the last of the schools was closed in 1930/1931.”¹⁰⁶⁸

The majority of ulema and Islamic intellectuals resented the closing down of the madrasas in 1924. Bein states: “Some reform-minded ulema felt particularly dismayed and even betrayed because they felt that the republican government had abruptly ended a project that was on the right track and could have had a bright future. Their years of struggle for the remaking of religious education, and then advances they believed they had achieved, were brushed aside. From their perspective, the madrasas not only were salvageable but actually were well on their way to becoming progressive schools of modern religious learning. The government’s explanations for closing them down therefore appeared to some of the reform-minded ulema as flimsy and dishonest.”¹⁰⁶⁹

Resentment from traditional religious scholars was echoed in the Assembly also. After the law on the Unification of Education was passed in the Assembly, the conservative deputies within the People’s Party showed their dissatisfaction about the law when the Ministry of Education’s budget was discussed. During the session held on April 17, 1924, a number of members of parliament asserted their reservations about the change. The debates in the Assembly prove that

¹⁰⁶⁸ Winter, *“The Modernization of Education in Kemalist Turkey,”* 188.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Bein, *Ottoman Ulema, Turkish Republic,* 74.

the conservative deputies were very concerned about the direction of the Kemalist regime's anti-Islamic education. Most of them thought that the Kemalist attitude to the madrasas arbitrary. While the Kemalist authorities gave strong support to the local madrasas and religious education during the War of Independence, the shift in their policy was seen by the conservative deputies as an ideological agenda. During the debates in the Assembly, conservative deputies tried to convince the Kemalist deputies to reform the madrasas instead of abolishing them.

The conservative deputies objected to claims about the quality of madrasas also. According to the Kemalist regime, the madrasas were useless because of their physical condition. Vasif Bey, the Minister of Education, evaluated madrasas as insufficient because of their educators. Madrasas had one or two educators and this was not enough for an educational institution. However, when the Kemalist government could not establish enough schools in the rural areas, they operated village schools with one or two teachers. For the conservative deputies this proved the reform was untimely. These deputies and the conservative press stressed that the establishment of the new religious schools would not be sufficient for the needs of the entire people and the Government was not interested in supporting these new schools. In the Assembly debates, the conservative deputies prophesied the future failure of these schools as and this became a reality in 1931.

If we look at the discussions in the Assembly carefully, there were issues at stake beyond the role of state in inculcating Islamic principles. The contradictions of Kemalist notions of education were seen very well in these discussions. First the Assembly discussed the budget of the newly established the Directorate of Religious Affairs. The Ministry of Finance did not allocate any money in its budget for supporting religious affairs in the mosques. This attitude was criticized by Resit Aga, deputy of Malatya, very harshly. He pointed out that if Minister of Finance wanted to abolish all mosques (like the Minister of Education had done to madrasas), he had to explain his

attitude to the Assembly. Mustafa Feyzi Efendi, deputy of Konya, criticized the Minister of Finance for giving nothing to religious affairs. He also underlined that the Faculty of Theology could not be effective in educating muftis and other religious scholars because of economic deficiencies. Hafız Ibrahim Efendi, deputy of Isparta, prophesied the fate of the Faculty of Theology as: “it would be shut down in two years.”¹⁰⁷⁰ While education in the Faculty of Theology continued until 1933, the Kemalist regime always neglected religious education.

The second and the most important subject in these discussions was the abolition of the madrasas. The conservative deputies in the Kemalist party tried to convince public opinion and the radical and secular wings of their party of the importance of religious education. Mustafa Feyzi Efendi, deputy of Konya, underlined the importance of madrasas and their teachers, muderris. According to him, in a district there were approximately thirty villages and there were thirty students from these villages gathered in the madrasa of that district for their religious education. The cadis, mufti, and muderris of that district could teach these students religious learning, Islamic canon law, religious duties, prayers, and ablution. Those students could teach these points to their villagers after returning back to their villages. However, the Minister of Education shut down those madrasas and sent those students home to their villages. Mustafa Feyzi Bey was upset by the Government’s attitude which did not allocate any budget for religious affairs. He emphasized that if these madrasas steered people wrong, the government’s decision was understandable, but if this decision was arbitrary, the decision should be revised. Mustafa Feyzi Bey said that if these madrasas were shut down because of an arbitrary decision, he could not consent to this decision.¹⁰⁷¹

¹⁰⁷⁰ *TBMM ZC*, 17 Apr. 1924, v.8, 805.

¹⁰⁷¹ *TBMM ZC*, 17 Apr. 1924, v.8, 806.

Kamil Efendi, deputy of Karahisarisahip, underlined the contradictions in the decision of the Kemalist Government to abolish all madrasas. He separated madrasas into two parts: the Darulhilafe Madrasa and the medaris-i ilmiye.¹⁰⁷² According to Kamil Efendi, Darulhilafe Madrasa had a good program which was prepared in a modern and reformed spirit. Because of lack of funds, the Ottoman Government established only thirty Darulhilafe Madrasas. On the other hand, there were many villages in where peasants were looking for someone to educate their children. For raising imams to provide for peasants' religious needs and educators to teach their children, the Ankara Government established medaris-i ilmiye during the ministry of Mustafa Fehmi Efendi, the Minister of Sharia in the national government. These religious schools had their own program, but were less important than the Darulhilafe Madrasas because of lack of scholars in their boards. Kamil Efendi underlined the hasty approach of the Kemalist Government to the abolition of madrasas. He advised the Minister of Education, Vasif Bey, to scrutinize every madrasa to see if it was suitable for education or not, instead of destroying all of them. If some madrasas were proper for education, they could continue their service, and the rest could be shut down. Kamil Efendi emphasized that while the state needed many educational institutions, the Government's decision to shut down madrasas was not wise. After the Law on the Unification of Education was passed in the Assembly, the Ministry of Education could transform the Darulhilafe Madrasas into the imam-hatip schools. There were forty thousand villages in Turkey and those thirty religious schools would not be enough to serve the needs of people. Moreover, he stressed that the haste of the Ministry of Education was not logical. When Kamil Efendi said that within three years the Faculty of Theology could not register any students because of lack of secondary

¹⁰⁷² Medaris-i ilmiye was a kind of medrese relatively less important than Darulhilafe Medrese. The total courses and hours of these courses in medaris-i ilmiye were less than Darulhilafe Medrese..

education, other conservative deputies, such as Ziyaeetin Efendi from Erzurum and Hafiz Ibrahim Efendi from Isparta, approved him.¹⁰⁷³ The conservative deputies were very well aware of Kemalist intentions in the religious education; however, their power was limited against the radical wing of the Kemalist party.

The government's decision to shut down madrasas was also criticized by Raif Efendi, deputy of Erzurum. When existing schools could satisfy just only one tenth of Turkey's needs, the ban on religious schools was a mistake. It was true that some madrasas were not suitable for a quality education, but it could be possible to reform these institutions and transform them into modern schools. He asked the Minister of Education how many elementary schools the ministry had in the villages, how many elementary school teachers would be graduated from the teachers' college, and who would teach villagers their religious beliefs? Raif Efendi asserted that without imams and teachers, the character of people would degenerate. If the Government would not send a teacher to the peasants to give them a religious education, these people could turn into savages.¹⁰⁷⁴

Raif Efendi described madrasas as the places in where people gained ideals. He especially gave the example of Mehmetcik¹⁰⁷⁵ in the Turkish War of Independence. He argued that it was because of "the soul of Islam" and the soldiers' devotion to God that the war had been won. When Raif Efendi asked how these Mehmetcik got their ideals, the Kemalist deputy Izzet Ulvi Bey shouted as "by Turkish blood." Hafiz Ibrahim Efendi, deputy of Isparta, replied to same question: "by the soul of Islam." Raif Efendi answered his own question as "the thing you call Turkishness,

¹⁰⁷³ *TBMM ZC*, 17 Apr. 1924, v.8, 815-816.

¹⁰⁷⁴ *TBMM ZC*, 17 Apr. 1924, v.8, 818.

¹⁰⁷⁵ Mehmetcik (literally Little Mehmet) is a general term used affectionately to refer soldiers of the Ottoman Army and Turkish Army.

gentlemen, (is about) placing Islamic faith into the Turkish nation's bosom." Imams educated in the madrasas gave this ideal to the people, according to Raif Efendi.¹⁰⁷⁶

The meaning of the Unification of Education was totally different in Raif Efendi's mind. According to him the aim of the unification of the education system was for all educational institutions including the religious, scientific ones to be pulled under one center. It did not mean the closing down some of these institutions and keeping the others. If the Government shut down all the institutions at the same time, it could be understandable. Raif Bey criticized the Kemalist Government as instead of correcting the deficiencies of madrasas, they preferred to destroy them. However, destroying these institutions without establishing alternative schools was delusional. The Imam-Hatip Schools, which would be total only thirty schools in different parts of Turkey, would be insufficient for providing for the religious needs of people. Pupils from the villages would not go to Imam-Hatip Schools in the cities because of their distance. The result of this change would be savagery in the villages because of lack of imams and teachers.¹⁰⁷⁷

Vasif Bey, the Minister of Education, replied all these critics from the perspective of the Kemalist Government. First of all he underlined the obsolete mentality of madrasas which was admitted by the religious scholars in the Ottoman Empire. Because of their obsolescence, there were some reforms carried out by the Ottoman scholars as transforming these madrasas into Darulhilafe Madrasa which was a reformed religious school which had both religious and scientific courses in its curriculum. Vasif Bey was not sure about why these old style madrasas were opened by the Governments of the National Assembly. These madrasas were in ruins where all religious and scientific education was taught by a muderris. Vasif Bey emphasized that at least ten educators

¹⁰⁷⁶ *TBMM ZC*, 17 Apr. 1924, v.8, 818.

¹⁰⁷⁷ *TBMM ZC*, 17 Apr. 1924, v.8, 818-819.

should be employed in schools where an elementary and secondary education was given. Vasif Bey questioned the quality of education in these medreses in where just one or two muderris was employed. He assured the deputies that in any country an institution could not be run by one or two educators. Raif Efendi countered this assertion by asking how many educators were employed in the elementary schools. Vasif Bey confessed that as the Minister of Education he was not happy with the number of elementary school teachers who were employed in these schools. He indicated that the Ministry tried to employ at least six educators in a six-class elementary school and at least four teachers in a four-class elementary school. Therefore, the Government would not allow any institution to be active with two educators.¹⁰⁷⁸

Vasif Bey also criticized the effectiveness of the madrasas. The Minister of Education reflected the Kemalist perspective that while the madrasas trained many valuable people two or three centuries ago, they were not now in good condition. He also used statistics about the pupils in the madrasas. According to Vasif Bey, there were 18,000 students registered in the madrasas; however, just 6,000 of them were actually present. The rest were busy as grocers or tradesmen. Vasif Bey asked conservative deputies: “my honorable friends, is this a religious education?”¹⁰⁷⁹

The vocational school issue was another concern for the conservative deputies. Mustafa Fevzi Efendi stressed that it was necessary to educate in all areas after the Unification of Education. However, there was no school to educate pupils for religious professions. The elementary and secondary schools were not proper for religious education because they were not vocational schools. Mustafa Feyzi Efendi pointed out one common idea among the conservative deputies. Inasmuch as Turks would not be irreligious and the religion was necessary for them, religious

¹⁰⁷⁸ *TBMM ZC*, 17 Apr. 1924, v.8, 820- 821.

¹⁰⁷⁹ *TBMM ZC*, 17 Apr. 1924, v.8, 821.

schools were needed for training muftis and imams. However, the Imam-Hatip schools, which were established after the abolition of the madrasas, were not sufficient.¹⁰⁸⁰

Vasif Bey tried to alleviate the concerns of the conservative deputies over vocational subjects. In compliance with the law on the Unification of Education, not only religious schools but military schools as well were came under the Ministry of Education. After the law was passed in the Assembly, the students would be selected from the high schools if they wished to join the Military Academy. Vasif Bey tried to explain that there were no vocational schools for professions such as law, medicine, agriculture, and trade. All these professions got their students from secondary schools which had unified program of instruction. Vasif Bey emphasized that he gave orders to establish imam-hatip schools as vocational schools for the religious education which were established after the law on the Unification of Education was passed.¹⁰⁸¹ While Vasif Bey pointed out that the military schools were under the Ministry of Education and their instructors were chosen from among the non-military educators,¹⁰⁸² the system was changed and the vocational military schools were returned to the Ministry of National Defense the next year.

The lack of a systematic curriculum in education was another concern for the deputies in the Assembly. Kamil Efendi, another conservative deputy from Karahisar-i Sahip, stressed this lack. The lack of a common curriculum was a long-term problem of the state. He mentioned his experiences from the Tanzimat Era. The main lack in instruction was common program. Kamil Efendi emphasized the attitudes of muderris in madrasas and school managers. According to him, because of the lack of a systematic approach to education and this education's dependence on the

¹⁰⁸⁰ *TBMM ZC*, 17 Apr. 1924, v.8, 817.

¹⁰⁸¹ *TBMM ZC*, 17 Apr. 1924, v.8, 822.

¹⁰⁸² *BCA*, 22 Dec. 1924, Folder no: 14313, Document no: 143.23.12.

scholar's own methods, individual students were harmed. Kamil Efendi pointed out such harmful methods as superstitions among some of muderris of madrasas and natural theories which were inaccurate among some school managers. Young people were harmed by lack of an appropriate curriculum. Kamil Efendi gave credit to calisthenics which were beneficial for military programs in Turkey. On the other hand, intellectual training was too often not more than an encyclopedic approach which aimed to teach a small piece of every subject. Therefore, the goals of education were not met. Education should give a good self-control and a healthy character to youth.¹⁰⁸³

Moral education was another topic discussed in the Assembly. According to Kamil Efendi, the moral education without the sacred feelings, that is, not based on the fear of God, was deficient and imperfect. If people did not feel the fear of God in their hearts, the Government could not provide law and order. Moral education was better than police for controlling people in a peaceful way. Kamil Efendi suggested to the Kemalist Government to base moral education on the fear of God.¹⁰⁸⁴

The right to establish private schools was another subject in the Assembly debates. Conservative deputies were in favor of this right, but the Kemalist Government was opposed. Mustafa Feyzi Efendi, deputy of Konya, asked the Minister of Education "if the madrasas will be shut down in the districts and the Government will not establish any school there, is it possible for a muderris to settle in a place and to educate pupils by himself? Does the Ministry have the authority to forbid this education? If yes, how does the Ministry get this authorization?" Vasif Bey replied these questions in a negative way. All schools would be controlled by the Ministry of Education and this law would not allow any kind of private school out of the control of the Ministry

¹⁰⁸³ *TBMM ZC*, 17 Apr. 1924, v.8, 814.

¹⁰⁸⁴ *TBMM ZC*, 17 Apr. 1924, v.8, 815.

of Education. Vasif Bey added that they would not accept foreign notions of private schools. Mustafa Feyzi Efendi summarized this answer as no freedom of thought and no freedom in the Republic. Ali Riza Efendi, deputy of Amasya, supported Mustafa Feyzi Efendi and added “in that case, there is not freedom of conscience either.”¹⁰⁸⁵

The Kemalist majority’s ideological aim in education produced another argument in the Assembly. Ziyaettin Efendi, deputy of Erzurum, was doubtful about the Government’s actions. He pointed out that more than forty madrasas were closed without establishing schools. He emphasized that if every decision of Government was supposed to be impeccable and to be approved by deputies without question, the Assembly meant nothing. Therefore, he saw the shutting down of the madrasas without establishing enough schools as either: because of the ignorance of the Government or to serve another purpose. Hafiz Ibrahim Efendi, deputy of Isparta, indicated that the action was a result of an ideological approach instead of a logical one. He condemned the Minister of Education for prejudice against religious students. As an example, while Vasif Bey was a public prosecutor in the Independence Tribunals, he stereotyped all madrasa students as fanatic adherents. Hafiz Ibrahim Efendi thought that the madrasas were forced to shut down because of the Minister’s personal thought, mentality, and desire.¹⁰⁸⁶

The last conservative objections to the Kemalist Government were seen in April 1924. After these discussions, there was no longer any serious disapproval of Kemalist educational policies in the Assembly because of the limited power of conservative deputies. From their perspective, in 1924, the republican authorities had simply executed the last stage of a clandestine scheme hatched by their Unionist predecessors a decade earlier. As Bein emphasizes, some of

¹⁰⁸⁵ *TBMM ZC*, 17 Apr. 1924, v.8, 827.

¹⁰⁸⁶ *TBMM ZC*, 17 Apr. 1924, v.8, 829.

these misgivings were even voiced in the press of Istanbul before the government clamped down on all opposition publications in 1925.¹⁰⁸⁷

The most significant conservative magazine in Istanbul at that time was *Sebilurresad*. The newspaper showed its dissatisfaction with the Law on the Unification of Education. It harshly criticized the sale of the madrasas to other institutions.¹⁰⁸⁸ While the Kemalist press applauded the abolition of the madrasas as “destroying sixteen thousand hearths of fanatic adherents,”¹⁰⁸⁹ *Sebilurresad* rejected this idea and summarized the issue as “by the help of this law not sixteen thousand hearths of fanatics extinguished but the hearths of religious scholars.”¹⁰⁹⁰ After the abolition of the madrasas, the Kemalist Government decided to establish imam-hatip schools. *Sebilurresad* described the fate of these schools as vague. According to Yahya Afif, these schools were vain and useless because of their curriculum. They could be useful only in Istanbul, but in small cities these schools were not attractive. In the old system, imams and preachers were educated by madrasas; people could send their children to the local madrasas. However, they would not send their children to a school in a different city. When people did not send their children to the imam-hatip schools, those schools were abolished one by one by the Government.¹⁰⁹¹ *Sebilurresad* summarized these events “we heard that Nigde Imam-Hatip School was abolished. It was clear the purpose of the Law on the Unification of Education was the abrogation of the entire religious institutions. The Minister of Education mentioned the establishment of Imam-Hatip

¹⁰⁸⁷ Bein, *Ottoman Ulema, Turkish Republic*, 73-74.

¹⁰⁸⁸ “Medreseler Satilabilir mi?” [Can the madrasas be sold?], *Sebilurresad*, 9 Oct. 1924, 1.

¹⁰⁸⁹ *Cumhuriyet*, 2 Oct. 1924, 1.

¹⁰⁹⁰ “Ocak Kapatmak da Meziyet imis” [Shutting down a Hearth was a Virtue Also], *Sebilurresad*, 9 Oct. 1924, 1.

¹⁰⁹¹ Yahya Afif, “Inhilal Eden Bir Ilim Ordusu” [An Army of Education which was abolished], *Sebilurresad*, 5 Jun. 1924, 70-71.

Schools while the madrasas were shutting down. The purpose of the Government was deceptive when these schools were established. Right now, they were closing one by one.”¹⁰⁹²

After the abolition of the madrasas, the possessions of these institutions were given to different organizations in Turkey. Some of the ex-madrasas were converted into schools if they were appropriate for education. If not, those schools were sold for funds to establish new schools. The Madrasa of Hamidiye in Istanbul was leased to the Trade and Provisions Bourse in 1925. The madrasa of Zeynep Sultan Mosque was given to the Artists’ Association. Zincirli Cami Madrassa was granted to the Teachers’ Association as a headquarters.¹⁰⁹³ The properties and possessions of the madrasas were distributed to many different associations and their traces erased by the regime. According to the newspaper *Sebilurresad*, this was the cause of great dissatisfaction among ordinary people.¹⁰⁹⁴

The abolition of the traditional madrasa system by the Law on the Unification of Education had caused particular dissatisfaction among Kurds. The new ‘unified, modern, secular, egalitarian and national’ educational system of the Kemalist regime became a problem for a society, which identified itself as Islamic rather than national, and which was fragmented into numerous regional, tribal, racial and linguistic units.¹⁰⁹⁵ Kurds were affected negatively because of this nationalist education. Omer Taspinar sees this as an assimilation program: “The nationalist-secularist

¹⁰⁹² “Imam Hatip Mektepleri Lagvediliyor” [The Imam Hatip Schools are abolishing], *Sebilurresad*, 27 Nov. 1924, 1.

¹⁰⁹³ *BCA*, 15 Feb. 1925, Folder no: 51.0.0.0, Document no: 13.114.15. *BCA*, 18 Jan. 1925, Folder no: 1407, Document no: 12.69.17. *BCA*, 24 May 1925, Folder no: 1971, Document no: 14.32.4. *BCA*, 2 Nov. 1925, Folder no: 22915, Document no: 192.313.15. *BCA*, 16 May 1926, Folder no: 22922, Document no: 192.314.3.

¹⁰⁹⁴ “Tevhid-i Tedrisat Kanunu’nun Tarz-i Tatbiki Hakkında Antalya Mebusu Hoca Rasih Efendi ile Mulakat” [Interview with Hoca Rasih Efendi, Deputy of Antalya, about the Implementation of the Unification of Education], 12 Jun. 1924, *Sebilurresad*, 89-90.

¹⁰⁹⁵ Winter, “*The Modernization of Education in Kemalist Turkey*,” 186.

priorities of the new Government were clearly reflected in the Law on the Unification of Education which closed all religious schools and effectively banned the education of non-Turkish languages. As the tradition of Ottoman cosmopolitanism and tolerance for multi-nationalism came to an end, the new Government purged most of the Kurdish officials from senior level public administration in the eastern provinces. All references to a land called “Kurdistan” were removed from maps and official documents, and Turkish names gradually replaced the names of Kurdish towns and villages. During the years to follow, the Turkish state embarked upon a program of assimilation whereby the national education system and military service became primary instruments of ‘Turkification’.¹⁰⁹⁶

After the Sheikh Said rebellion, on September 24, 1925, the Turkish government prepared the “Sark Islahat Planı”, Reform Plan for the East, which provided for special administrative arrangements for eastern areas and introduced the Inspector-General system.¹⁰⁹⁷ This Turkification program, which included 27 points, was implemented after the Kemalist regime started its assimilation plan in eastern Turkey. In the second article, Turkey was separated into five different inspectorate regions and eastern Turkey became the fifth inspectorate region. The Kemalist Government decided to settle Turkish and Albanian immigrants from Bulgaria and Yugoslavia into the eastern region. Moreover, these Turkish immigrants were settled in abandoned properties left after the Armenian deportation, so not distributed to Kurds.

Articles 13, 14 and 16 in the Reform Plan for the East related to the cultural and educational assimilation of the Kurdish people under the banner of Turkification. In article 13, the Kemalist Government banned any language besides Turkish from governmental institutions, street bazaars,

¹⁰⁹⁶ Taspınar, *Kurdish Nationalism and Political Islam in Turkey*, 79.

¹⁰⁹⁷ Akcura, *Devletin Kurt Filmi*, 51.

schools and other public places in many cities, such as Diyarbakir, Malatya, Elazig, Van, and Bitlis which were located in this region. The Kemalist regime categorized these cities as originally Turkish, but Kurdish identity had become dominant. Therefore, the Kemalist Government tried to save these cities by prohibiting all languages except Turkish.¹⁰⁹⁸

In article 14, the Kemalist Government decided to establish branches of Turk Ocaklari (Turkish Hearths) and schools in cities, such as Siirt and Mardin, predominantly inhabited by Arabs. The regime asserted that these people were originally Turkish but these Arabs regarded themselves as Kurdish. Therefore, they had to be saved as soon as possible from the Kurdish effect. Moreover, establishing girls' schools and increasing girls' desire to these schools were encouraged by the Government in article 14. The province of Dersim was seen as a key point to decrease Kurdish influence.¹⁰⁹⁹ In article 16, the Kemalist Government banned speaking Kurdish in western Turkey where Kurds lived as a minority. Beyond this ban, girls were encouraged to go to schools and learn Turkish as soon as possible.

In conclusion, Kemalist plans for madrasas was changed many times. The Kemalist attitude was positive towards to the madrasas and religious education during the Independence War. Moreover, the Kemalist Government supported new types of madrasas in 1921 and 1922. However, Kemalist patience with madrasas was over by 1924 after they strengthened their power in the Government. The dichotomy in education was seen impossible by the Kemalist authorities in this period. Struggles of the conservative deputies within the Kemalist party ended in March 1924. Moreover, the traditional ties between Turkish and Kurdish ethnic groups were damaged after the closure of the madrasas in 1924.

¹⁰⁹⁸ *Ibid*, 56.

¹⁰⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 56.

4.3.2 Kemalist Educational Policies and its Deficiencies after the Law on the Unification of Education

Mustafa Kemal and the rest of the Kemalist leaders were initially hopeful for the results of the Law on the Unification of Education. In the opening speech of the Assembly in November 1924, Mustafa Kemal pointed out that reforms would continue in a serious way. He emphasized that these reforms needed a long time to get positive results. Even though the last reform had been implemented just eight months ago, the results of the law were seen clearly. Mustafa Kemal had observed the eagerness of republican teachers who were a ‘military of wisdom’ with their pupils in different parts of Turkey. Moreover, those teachers were very useful in teaching the rest of people in their location. Beyond the eagerness of teachers, republican and progressive people also felt desire for schools and showed their dissatisfaction with ignorance.¹¹⁰⁰ In the program of the new Ali Fethi Bey Government, popular interest in education was stressed once more. The Government would increase the number of educators and refrain from the useless changes in educational programs. In the program, Ali Fethi Bey assured the deputies that the main goal for the Government was raising a generation who were ready for life by the help of an ordered and disciplined education.¹¹⁰¹

While Mustafa Kemal and the Prime Minister Ali Fethi Bey were hopeful for the future of education in Turkey, the Assembly debates prove that the chronic problems in education were not solved in this period. First of all, the small budget for the education was the biggest obstacle. When the Kemalist government allotted only 400,000 Turkish liras out of 150 million liras to education, the members of the opposition party, Progressive Republican Party, demanded to

¹¹⁰⁰ *TBMM ZC*, 1 Nov. 1924, v.10, 3.

¹¹⁰¹ *TBMM ZC*, 27 Nov. 1924, v.10, 398.

increase the budget of education at least 2% out of the general budget. Beyond that, the Assembly debates show that the total number of schools and students in a very low level. Nearly 300,000 students had a chance to go to school out of more than a million students in 1924.

The Unification of Education was an ideological decision which was not well considered by the Kemalist leadership. The debates in the Assembly show this short-sighted ideological approach many times. First of all, when the Kemalist government needed to create institutions in the villages with one or two instructors, this contradicted their justification for the abolition of the madrasas. During the debates about the abolition of the madrasas, Vasif Bey, the Minister of Education, insisted that the quantity of the educators in the madrasas were not enough for a modern school, so the Government could not allow any institution to be active with only two educators.¹¹⁰² Beyond this, in vocational schools, the Government's ideological aim was evident. When the Law on the Unification of Education aimed to unify all schools under the control of the Ministry of Education, deputies who had military background managed to return the military schools to the control of the Ministry of National Defense. However, the religious schools remained strictly controlled by the Ministry of Education.

Critiques of educational policies were voiced by deputies soon after the Law on the Unification of Education was accepted in the Assembly. Ihsan Hamit Bey, deputy of Ergani, was one of the pessimistic deputies about the progress of education in Turkey. He described education as a 'disaster' in Turkey at that time. According to him, education was becoming anarchy. He described strikes and indiscipline of students in higher education. The strike of Teachers' College students, and the incidents at the Trolley School, Medical School, and Law School were proof of

¹¹⁰² *TBMM ZC*, 17 Apr. 1924, v.8, 821.

heartbreaking events in higher education.¹¹⁰³ Beyond this anarchy in higher education, Ihsan Hamit Bey emphasized that how the situation in the elementary schools was woeful. There were 3694 elementary schools in Turkey at that time, but 2394 of these schools were not appropriate for their desired goals. The remaining 1300 were insufficient for the 13 million in Turkey at that time. Therefore, there was a school for every ten thousand people. The total number of elementary school students was 238,000; however, nearly one million students could not have a chance to go to any schools. Ihsan Hamit Bey compared the situation Turkey and Sweden. While the population of Sweden was half of Turkey, there were 14500 elementary schools there and just only 1300 in Turkey. Ihsan Hamit Bey asked to the Minister of Education how he would solve these problems in education. He answered his own question: “in my opinion, our present laws and methods are not enough to solve our problems in this case. I request the law of primary education as soon as possible from the Ministry of Education. By this means one fourth of our children will have chances to receive education.”¹¹⁰⁴ This speech is one of the most important confessions of the deficiency of the Kemalist policy in education. When conservative deputies warned the Government against abolishing the madrasas without establishing any schools instead of them, the secular wing of the People’s Party did not listen. Their concern were ignored by the Kemalist Government. Less than a year later, these deficiencies were admitted to by Kemalist deputies also.

During the discussions about the budget of the Ministry of Education on January 31, 1925, the Kemalist regime confessed the deficiencies in their budget policies and educational reforms. At the end of the discussion, some decisions taken by the Government. First, the budget of Ministry of Education had been increasing since 1908 except for the war years; however, it was a very small

¹¹⁰³ *TBMM ZC*, 31 Jan. 1925, v.13, 15.

¹¹⁰⁴ *TBMM ZC*, 31 Jan. 1925, v.13, 15-16.

amount of money which could not fulfill the necessities of the state. Therefore, the Ministry of Education should have searched for new sources and tools to complete these necessities. The lack of a clear program was another deficiency which was mentioned in this report. The change in the Ministry caused much confusion in the educational affairs; therefore, the Ministry of Education needed a new program. Another deficiency in the report was the number of students in the age of compulsory education. Only three hundred thousand children had a chance to go to school out of more than a million. This problem had to be solved immediately. Another deficiency was the lack of a kindergarten system in Turkey. These schools should be established as a supplementary school to the primary education as soon as possible.¹¹⁰⁵ These deficiencies, in particular the alternative of not destroying the madrasas but instead transforming some of them into modern schools, were uttered by the conservative deputies after the law for the Unification of Education was accepted by the Assembly. However, the Kemalist government ignored the realities of the educational conditions that time.

The Progressive Republican Party criticized the educational policies of the Kemalist Government in the Assembly. First of all, Kazim Karabekir Pasha, the leader of the Progressive Republican Party, summarized the history of education in Turkey for a better understanding of present problems. According to him, education meant the progress of the people, and this progress was related to public education. Education in the Ottoman Empire was not backward prior to the era of machinery and the discovery of microbes. After the progress in these areas, the Ottomans could make no headway and education was hurt. The gap between the developed nations and Ottomans became wider.¹¹⁰⁶

¹¹⁰⁵ *TBMM ZC*, 31 Jan. 1925, v.13, 321.

¹¹⁰⁶ *TBMM ZC*, 25 Feb. 1925, v.14, 292.

Kazim Karabekir Pasha compared the Tanzimat Era in the Ottoman Empire with modern nations in Europe. According to him, the modern states had balanced progress in every aspect of life; therefore, they managed to reconcile their educational system with other social and political institutions and they prepared their youth for economic and social life. Modern nations sought to achieve common soul, common goal, and common interest through education. However, the free administration could not be established in the Ottoman society in the nineteenth century, therefore, these three assets could not be achieved in Ottoman education.¹¹⁰⁷

When the Tanzimat Era ended, Ottoman society passed to the Constitutional Era without creating a united structure in a spiritual, sentimental, and material way, unlike developed nations. Kazim Karabekir Pasha emphasized that by the help of Ottoman citizens who read foreign works and got a European education, Ottoman education showed some progress. The meaning of education was partly understood at that era. However, political changes forced alterations in the personnel who had responsibility for education. Therefore, Ottoman education could not achieve real progress.¹¹⁰⁸

In the Republican Era, Kazim Karabekir Pasha criticized the educational policies of the Kemalist Government in many ways. First of all, an insufficient curriculum was a serious problem for the education in Turkey. He mostly focused on the practical knowledge instead of theoretical one had become outdated after the First World War. The practical education came into preeminence after the economy became the axis of life. According to Kazim Karabekir Pasha, the Ministry of Education should prepare program based on practical education for making progress. This program should be considered as a future program which would solve the possible problems

¹¹⁰⁷ *TBMM ZC*, 25 Feb. 1925, v.14, 292-293.

¹¹⁰⁸ *TBMM ZC*, 25 Feb. 1925, v.14, 293.

for the next decade. If the Government prepared a program for only this year, the next year that program could be cancelled by another government. Therefore, this kind of short-term programs would not be beneficial. He advised to the Government to prepare a long-term program and not change people administering this program frequently.¹¹⁰⁹ Moreover, the Government accepted only the curriculum of developed nations but not practical courses which were useful for real life.¹¹¹⁰

The lack of public education in the program of the Ministry of Education was another critique by Kazim Karabekir. The opposition leader pointed out that the enemy was not only a foreign power which invaded the state. People in Turkey should be educated to recognize enemies in sanitary, economic, and intellectual problems. People should be equipped with knowledge for struggling against these enemies. According to Kazim Karabekir, if the people in Turkey were equipped with that knowledge, the modernity could permeate Turkish society easily.¹¹¹¹

The budget for the Ministry of Education was another critique. Feridun Fikri Bey, deputy of Dersim, indicated that the Education budget was not enough to raise future generations under the notion of popular sovereignty and republic. Moreover, this lack would be a problem in enabling people to show their proficiency and sufficiency in performing political and civil duties. The Kemalist Government allocated only 400,000 Turkish liras for primary education out of 150 million Turkish liras in the government budget. This was a very small amount of money, which seemed nothing to Feridun Fikri Bey. While the developed nations, such as France, attached importance to the all levels of education, in countries where the total number of literate people was

¹¹⁰⁹ *TBMM ZC*, 25 Feb. 1925, v.14, 293-299.

¹¹¹⁰ *TBMM ZC*, 25 Feb. 1925, v.14, 301.

¹¹¹¹ *TBMM ZC*, 25 Feb. 1925, v.14, 299.

low, such as Turkey, the primary education should be considered as the most important level. The Turkish Government should attach importance to the primary education for the sake of the Turkish nation. Feridun Fikri Bey asserted that the deficiency in the primary school budget would cause some problems in the development of democracy, republicanism, and popular sovereignty. He advised the Government to devote at least two percent of the government budget to primary education.¹¹¹²

During discussions about the budget of the Ministry of Education, the Kemalist deputies defended the policies of the Kemalist Government in education. Agaoglu Ahmet Bey, deputy of Kars, emphasized the importance of an ideal in education. According to Ahmet Bey, raising practical people who would be useful to society was important in education. He agreed with opposition leader, Kazim Karabekir, on this point. However, he was against the notion of raising only practical people who thought only of their livelihoods. This response is not entirely true. While Kazim Karabekir Pasha indicated the importance of practical people for the sake of state, the Kemalist deputy twisted his words the next day. Agaoglu Ahmet Bey described the situation in Germany in the mid of the nineteenth century. According to him, Germany was advanced in many areas, such as science, philosophy, literature, and industry. However, the lack of ideals in German society and personal interests over national interests hindered possible unification.¹¹¹³ Agaoglu Ahmet Bey's speech revealed a more ideological approach to education rather than an objective one under the guise of giving an ideal to future generations.

Any deficiency of the education budget was denied by some Kemalist deputies. Hakki Tarik Bey, deputy of Giresun, claimed the total amount of spending for the educational affairs was

¹¹¹² *TBMM ZC*, 26 Feb. 1925, v.14, 359-360.

¹¹¹³ *TBMM ZC*, 26 Feb. 1925, v.14, 367- 370.

enough and acceptable. He emphasized that there were many new matters, which were not seen in previous government budgets, added to the education budget. Beyond this, Hakki Tarik Bey asserted that the budget of the Government for education was double of the budget of the first government of the Constitutional Era. Therefore, the opponents should accept this budget with pleasure.¹¹¹⁴

While Hakki Tarik Bey was satisfied with the education budget, its deficiencies were confessed by the Minister of Education, Sukru Saracoglu Bey. The Minister conceded that if the Government did not retire any educator and hired all students of the Teacher's College after their graduation, they could solve the problem of appointing teachers in 64 years.¹¹¹⁵ This confession is telling: when the government banned all madrasas, conservative deputies asked the Minister of Education how they could fulfill the needs of villages and small towns for teachers. The Kemalist regime had exact plan to solve the illiteracy problem.

After the confession of the deficiencies in the primary education, Sukru Saracoglu Bey tried to convince the Assembly to solve the problem with the help of a new type school which would be established in the villages. The Kemalist Minister described these schools as 'village school' which required less money and less time to establish. According to this project, teachers would be selected from people already close to the peasants' life styles. Sukru Saracoglu indicated that just one or two educators would be enough in these schools.¹¹¹⁶ This is another Kemalist reversal. While the conservative deputies tried to explain the importance of the madrasas in the

¹¹¹⁴ *TBMM ZC*, 26 Feb. 1925, v.14, 379- 380.

¹¹¹⁵ *TBMM ZC*, 28 Feb. 1925, v.15, 14.

¹¹¹⁶ *TBMM ZC*, 28 Feb. 1925, v.15, 15.

small town and villages, especially in the eastern regions in where the modern school system was insufficient Minister of Education Vasif Bey rejected their critique.¹¹¹⁷

The military high schools were another problem in the Kemalist educational policies. Military schools were attached to the Ministry of Education after the Law on the Unification of Education. However, the deputies who had military origins started a challenge to attach those schools to the Ministry of National Defense again. Ekrem Bey, deputy of Rize, criticized the Government's policy as being a barrier on the enrollment to the Military Academy and the Military Medical School. Cafer Tayyar Pasha emphasized that it was difficult to inculcate a military spirit in the pupils in the civil schools controlled by the Ministry of Education. Kazim Karabekir Pasha rejected the notion of transforming all schools into civil schools by government action. Sukru Saracoglu Bey replied to all these critiques as a violation of the revolution if these schools were separated from the administration of the Ministry of Education. According to the Minister of Education, any school which saw education as a goal could not be excluded from the management of the Ministry of Education and its program.¹¹¹⁸ However, the speech of Sukru Saracoglu Bey became void when the government decided to attach all military schools to the Ministry of National Defense.

When the Sheik Said Rebellion broke out in February 1925, the moderate Cabinet of Ali Fethi Bey resigned and the Cabinet of Ismet Inonu, more radical than Ali Fethi Bey's Cabinet, was formed in March 1925. Hamdullah Suphi Bey was the first Minister of Education of Ismet Inonu's government. He started to carry out his agenda to solve the lasting problems in education. However, his ministry lasted only until December 1925. The most important educational policy in

¹¹¹⁷ *TBMM ZC*, 17 Apr. 1924, v.8, 821.

¹¹¹⁸ *TBMM ZC*, 28 Feb. 1925, v.15, 16.

his ministry was the ‘regional vocational schools.’ Hamdullah Suphi Bey agreed with the opinion of the opposition leader, Kazim Karabekir Pasha, in the importance of vocational schools. According to the Minister of Education, at least 75 or 80% of all schools should be vocational schools. These schools should provide for local needs. Therefore, every regional vocational school should have a different program because of the varieties of people’s needs.¹¹¹⁹ These types of schools were established in 1940 as ‘Village Institutes’, offering both practical and classical courses. Another mission of these institutes was training teachers for each village and sending them back to form new village schools.

In December 1925, Mustafa Necati Bey, one of the closest associates of Mustafa Kemal, became the Minister of Education. His Ministry lasted until his death on January 1, 1929. Mustafa Necati Bey’s ministry was the longest one in the early period of the Turkish Republic. During his ministry the chronic problems of education could not be solved. The same deficiencies lasted until his death. The vocational schools subject was the key turning point for the Kemalist regime in educational affairs. Halit Bey, deputy of Kastamonu and one of the members of the opposition party, underlined the mistakes of the Law on the Unification of Education for vocational schools. According to him, leaving all vocational schools to the administration of the Ministry of Education was a mistake. If the agricultural schools were left to the Ministry of Agriculture and the other schools to the related Ministries, progress in the vocational schools could be achieved. Mustafa Necati Bey confessed the incompetence of the Ministry of Education to manage the vocational schools under its administration.¹¹²⁰

¹¹¹⁹ *TBMM ZC*, 5 Mar. 1925, v.15, 173.

¹¹²⁰ *TBMM ZC*, 20 Mar. 1926, v.23, 265- 269.

The deficiencies in the primary education were mentioned once by Halit Bey. This problem was a catastrophe in the eastern Turkey. After the revolt of Sheik Said was suppressed, the Kemalist Government did little for education in this region. School statistics proves how awful the situation was. Halit Bey discussed the province of Hakkari first. According to him, there was neither primary school nor high school in this province in 1926. This is a really striking reality which proves the Kemalist failure in education in the Eastern provinces. The madrasas were the core of education in this region, but, the Kemalist regime cut all of these ties without put anything instead of them. Beyond the province of Hakkari, Halit Bey discussed the province of Genc, in where the Sheik Said Revolt was broken out. There were only eight primary schools with 170 pupils in this province. The total number of pupils was negligible in this province also. The condition of education was catastrophic; nevertheless, the rest of Turkey was hardly better. According to the statistical data, school enrollment in Turkey was 2.8% of the total population of 13 million. Halit Bey compared the miserable situation in Turkish education to Germany and Bulgaria. According to him in a German battalion there was no illiterate person. In a Bulgarian battalion 80-90% were literate. On the other hand, total literacy in a Turkish battalion was 3-5%. Halit Bey advised the Government to allocate enough money for education. The Cabinet of Ismet Pasha paid attention to the railways at that time and allocate millions to transportation. Halit Bey emphasized that the Government should allocate the same budget for education if they wanted to make progress.¹¹²¹

Mustafa Necati Bey admitted the deficiencies, voiced by Halit Bey, in primary education. He confessed that there were 350,000-360,000 pupil at all educational levels in Turkey. However, there were around a million and half students of school age. Moreover, just only 100,000 pupils

¹¹²¹ *TBMM ZC*, 20 Mar. 1926, v.23, 266-267.

were in good conditions to continue their education. Mustafa Necati Bey indicated that the lack of educators was the main problem. Therefore, the Government aimed to educate at least 3000 students in the teachers' college and would send them to the villages after their graduation. Optimistically, the problem in this area would be solved within 10 years.¹¹²²

4.4 Alphabet Reform of 1928 and Literacy Drives

During the Kemalist modernization, the most drastic measure in the educational and cultural life of Turkey was the adoption of the Latin alphabet in 1928. Following the acceptance of Islam, Turks used the Arabic script for their language and Arabic and Persian loanwords and phrase structures became part of the Turkish language over many centuries. This Arabic script was one of the last tangible links connecting Turkey to its Ottoman past and to the rest of the Muslim world while at the same time separating it from the West. Therefore, the first task of the third period of the Assembly was to cut this tie and reform the Turkish alphabet.¹¹²³

The main Kemalist assertion about this reform was the inappropriateness of Arabic script for authentic Turkish phonology, which needed a new set of symbols to be correctly represented. Howard describes this situation as: “the Arabic script, they asserted, was ill-suited to the Turkish language. This was of course true: the orthography of Arabic, a Semitic language, relied on consonants arranged in groups and offered only three symbols for writing vowels. Many of its phonemes were foreign to Turkish and thus the written symbols for them had no relevance.”¹¹²⁴ Like Howard, Erik Jan Zürcher emphasizes this phonetic reason behind the reform project: “While this suited the Arabic and Persian vocabulary, which made up three-quarters of written late

¹¹²² *TBMM ZC*, 20 Mar. 1926, v.23, 268-269.

¹¹²³ Ozkan, *From the Abode of Islam*, 122. Price, *A History of Turkey*, 137. Zürcher, *Turkey*, 188. Heper, *Historical Dictionary*, 125. Kinzer, *Crescent and Star*, 45. Kinross, *Ataturk*, 501.

¹¹²⁴ Howard, *History of Turkey*, 98.

Ottoman, it was highly unsuitable for expressing the sounds of the Turkish part of the vocabulary, Arabic being rich in consonants but very poor in vowels while Turkish is exactly the opposite. The result was that Ottoman Turkish sometimes had four different signs for one single sound, while it could not express other sounds at all.”¹¹²⁵

Most Kemalist scholars emphasize the rationale for this reform as educational rather than ideological. The common idea among Kemalist scholars is the Arabic alphabet was an obstacle to the progress of education because of its difficulties for Turkish people.¹¹²⁶ Like Ozgen, Henry Elisha Allen underlines this assertion as: “displaying a veritable mania for education and a determination to stamp out illiteracy, the new government in 1928 decided to scrap the Arabic alphabet in which Turkish has been awkwardly written for centuries, and replace it with a Latinized alphabet which not only would suit the language better but which would also be much easier for the ordinary person to learn.”¹¹²⁷

On the other hand, Douglas Howard rejects the idea of seeing Arabic script as the only reason behind the illiteracy problem in Turkey. He indicates the other reasons as: “another argument for the alphabet change was that a phonetic alphabet would aid in raising literacy among the Turkish population. This probably was true also, but the low level of literacy in Turkey could hardly be blamed on the use of the Arabic script. The Arabic script had adequately served written Turkish for about a thousand years. For most of these centuries, few people anywhere in the world, including in Europe, had believed it necessary or good to educate common people. Low levels of

¹¹²⁵ Zurcher, *Turkey*, 188.

¹¹²⁶ Bekir Ozgen, *Cagdas Egitim ve Koy Enstituleri [Modern Education and Village Institutes]*, (Izmir: Dikili Belediyesi Kültür Yayınları, 1993), 29.

¹¹²⁷ Allen, *The Turkish Transformation*, 124-125.

literacy were more especially the result of the absence of a system of national public education and the belief that such a system was unnecessary.”¹¹²⁸

The results of the alphabet reform prove the ideological aims of the Kemalist modernization in education. Roderic Davison indicates that the alphabet reform was psychological in intent and aimed to cut another tie to the past, and to the Islamic East, and to push the nation toward the future and the West.¹¹²⁹ By the help of this, religious and other non-secular and non-nationalist texts of the past became increasingly inaccessible to the new generation of the Turkish Republic. Moreover, the alphabet reform severed future Turkish generations from the written Ottoman cultural heritage. Children, educated in the new characters, could not read what their ancestors had written, unless it were transcribed or republished in the new alphabet.¹¹³⁰

The success of the alphabet revolution encouraged the Kemalist elite to remove all Arabic and Persian loanwords from the Turkish language in the early 1930s. According to Erik Jan Zürcher: “After the alphabet reform, for several reasons the more extreme purists came to the fore. In the first place, the success of the alphabet reform encouraged the idea that this type of ‘revolution by decree’ was possible. In the second place, the nature of the new script encouraged purism. It had been designed to reflect the actual sounds of spoken Turkish, not to transcribe the shape of the old Ottoman writing in new letters. As a result, many of the originally Arabic and Persian words looked alien and even unintelligible in the new script. In the third place, the radical solutions of the purists – to remove all Arabic and Persian words from the language and create a

¹¹²⁸ Howard, *History of Turkey*, 98.

¹¹²⁹ Davison, *The Modern Nations*, 135.

¹¹³⁰ Kalaycioglu, *Turkish Dynamics*, 58. Howard, *History of Turkey*, 99. Kinzer, *Crescent and Star*, 45. Davison, *The Modern Nations*, 135.

pure Turkish one- were in tune with the extreme nationalism of the 1930s.”¹¹³¹ In particular, the Turkish Language Association, established in 1932, was a key player in this task. By the help of this Association, the Kemalist cadres created a pure Turkish language by introducing words from Turkic dialects in Central Asia and ancient literary sources.¹¹³²

This section scrutinizes the debates in the Assembly and in the Turkish press about the alphabet reform. The Turkish press was the main center of these discussions in the era before 1928. Especially in 1924, debates became very intense between pro-reformers and anti-reformers. Not only religious circles were against a language reform, but also some authors in the Kemalist press as well. In particular, in *Akbaba* and *Aksam* there was a great debate between pro-reform and anti-reform movements within the Kemalist circle. However, there were very few debates about the alphabet reform in the Turkish Grand National Assembly in 1924. When the Kemalist regime became stronger after the Law for the Maintenance of Order was accepted in March 1925, the ideas about reform in language became stronger in the Turkish press. The reform movement grew after 1926 and the Kemalist press tried to accustom Turkish public opinion for a possible reform. Finally, the reform became possible in November 1928, after discussions on the Law on the Adoption and Implementation of the Turkish Alphabet were held in the Assembly, where there was no opposition to the Kemalist regime. The Assembly debates indicate that Kemalist cadres were sure that the new alphabet would solve the illiteracy problem within a few years in Turkey. However, even though the regime started many literacy drives, the results did not satisfy Kemalist leaders. This section will scrutinize these ideological literacy drives also.

¹¹³¹ Zurcher, *Turkey*, 189-190.

¹¹³² Ozkan, *From the Abode of Islam*, 122.

4.4.1 Attempts of Alphabet Reform Before the Kemalist Regime

The reform of the alphabet and language was not a new topic for the Kemalist cadres. There had been proposals for an improvement of the Arabic script since the time of the Tanzimat Era. When the chasm between the written Ottoman of the literate elite and the vernacular of the Turkish population became very wide in the nineteenth century, the Young Ottomans attempted to bring the written language closer to the spoken one in the mid nineteenth century. Beyond these early initiatives, especially during the Second Constitutional Era, there were some initiatives for an alphabet reform. In this period, several Young Turk writers- Huseyin Cahit, Abdullah Cevdet, Celal Nuri- advocated the adoption of the Latin alphabet.¹¹³³

The rise of Turkish nationalism was one of the major key points behind these quests. Turk Dernegi (Turkish Society), established in December 1908 and publishing a journal of the same name, aimed to realize a simplified Turkish. As an important scholarly and cultural organization at that period, the Society included many non-Turkish Ottomans and foreign scholars among its members. Their initiatives for a simplified Turkish were a turning point in the relation between the language and culture.¹¹³⁴

While Turk Dernegi had little impact on the change of language, Turk Yurdu Cemiyeti (Turkish Homeland Society) was more influential. The society, founded in August 1911, became

¹¹³³ David Kushner, *The Rise of Turkish Nationalism*, (London: Frank Cass, 1977), 56. Lewis, *The Emergence*, 271. Zurcher, *Turkey*, 188- 189.

¹¹³⁴ Masami Arai, *Turkish Nationalism in the Young Turk Era*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992), 7. Atilla Ozkirimli and Turhan Baraz, *Cagdas Turk Edebiyati [Modern Turkish Literature]*, (Eskisehir: Anadolu Universitesi, 1993), 21. Lewis, *The Emergence*, 349.

a center of Turkism under the leadership of Yusuf Akcura and Ahmet Agaoglu.¹¹³⁵ The society advocated the simplification of written Turkish to better reflect the spoken language, and also worked to promote the political and economic interests of Turks all over the world. The ideology of Turk Yurdu Cemiyeti was expanded by Turk Ocaklari (Turkish Hearths) which was founded in 1912. Turkish Hearths had more materialistic aims than its predecessors. Bernard Lewis indicates that “Turk Ocaklari intended to advance the national education and raise the scientific, social, and economic level of the Turks, who are the foremost of the peoples of Islam, and to strive for the betterment of the Turkish race and language.”¹¹³⁶ All these aimed to create an ideologically nationalist perspective in the language subject.

In the literature circles, Genc Kalemler (Young Pens) was the vanguard of a simplified language reform during the second constitutional period. The journal, under the leadership of Omer Seyfeddin and Ziya Gokalp, was published in Salonika in 1911. Its members advocated a ‘new language’ (yeni lisan); therefore, they were known as Yeni Lisancilar.¹¹³⁷ Omer Seyfeddin was the major author who focused on using the spoken language in literature. He refused to use Arabic or Persian particles, or compounds in his articles.¹¹³⁸ Omer Seyfeddin disagreed with a radical purification which could create an artificial language. He believed that the possible artificial language would be the death of Turkish words. However, he supported the idea of using spoken Istanbul Turkish as the literary language, keeping all foreign words which had been assimilated

¹¹³⁵ Arai, *Turkish Nationalism*, 49- 50.

¹¹³⁶ Lewis, *The Emergence*, 230.

¹¹³⁷ Geoffrey Lewis, *The Turkish Language Reform: A Catastrophic Success*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 22. Arai, *Turkish Nationalism*, 30-31.

¹¹³⁸ Omer Seyfettin 'in *Butun Eserleri 13: Dil Konusunda Yazilari* [*The Entire Literary Works of Omer Seyfettin 13: Articles about Language*], (Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, 1989), 34.

and become part of the spoken language.¹¹³⁹ The negative results of the purification would be seen in the Kemalist reform later. The artificial language, created in the mid-1930s, resulted in some ridiculous projects, such as the Sun Language Theory which was a hypothesis in the 1930s that proposed that all human languages are descendants of one proto-Turkic primal language. Ziya Gokalp was another influential author in the society of Yeni Lisancilar. While his ideas were shaped by nationalist ideology, Ziya Gokalp was not an advocate of a new script. Moreover, he defended the preservation of the old script as a link with other Muslim societies.¹¹⁴⁰ Erik Jan Zürcher underlines his gradualist approach: “Ziya Gokalp and his circle advocated the replacement of Arabic and Persian grammatical elements in the language with Turkish ones and the discarding of ‘superfluous’ synonyms, but unlike the purists they accepted Arabic and Persian words that had become part of everyday language.”¹¹⁴¹

The idea of switching to the Latin alphabet was defended openly for the first time in the Second Constitutional Period. Bernard Lewis mentions that “the possibility of adopting the Latin alphabet was a topic of conversation among Ottoman officers during the Gallipoli campaign.” One of these examples was the initiative of Enver Pasha, the leader of the Committee of Progress and Union. He had experimented with a reformed version of the Ottoman script, by separating the Arabic letters instead of running them together into the normal script. However, the project caused

¹¹³⁹ Ibid, 156-157.

¹¹⁴⁰ Uriel Heyd, *Foundations of Turkish Nationalism: The Life and Teachings of Ziya Gokalp*, (London: Luzac, 1950), 120-121.

¹¹⁴¹ Zürcher, *Turkey*, 189.

some difficulties, such as misunderstanding of orders by military commanders, therefore; it had to be given up during the second year of the War.¹¹⁴²

4.4.2 Attempts of an Alphabet Reform during the Kemalist Regime

During the Turkish War of Independence an alphabet reform was not an issue because of the hard conditions of the state. However, after the victory reform was promoted by Kemalist reformers. At a meeting with representatives of the Istanbul press in September 1922, Huseyin Cahid Bey, the editor of newspaper *Tanin*, asked Mustafa Kemal “Why don’t we adopt Latin writing?” Mustafa Kemal answered: “It’s not yet time.” George Lewis describes this attitude of Mustafa Kemal as ‘understandable’ because of the structure of the Grand National Assembly, which was consisted of some fifty members of which were hodjas (professional men of religion), in addition to eight dervish sheikhs and five men who gave their occupation as ‘tribal chief’ at that time.¹¹⁴³

The idea of abandoning Arabic script entirely and replacing it with the Latin alphabet was put forward and discussed in Turkey in 1923 and 1924. Firstly, the issue was raised at the Izmir Economic Conference in February 1923, three months after the abolition of the sultanate. At the Economic Congress, a proposal for the adoption of the Latin alphabet was put forward and discussed, but was defeated on March 2, 1923. Kazim Karabekir Pasha, the chairman of the Congress, rejected it as damaging the unity of Islam. He explained “to adopt the Latin letters would be put a splendid weapon into the hands of all Europe; they would declare to the Islamic world

¹¹⁴² Lewis, *The Turkish Language Reform*, 29. Zurcher, *Turkey*, 188. Kinross, *Ataturk*, 502. Yalman, *Turkey in the World War*, 226.

¹¹⁴³ Lewis, *The Turkish Language Reform*, 197- 198.

that the Turks have adopted foreign writing and turned Christian. Such is the diabolical idea with which our enemies are working.”¹¹⁴⁴

The proposal in the Economic Congress was caused a public debate which lasted for several years. Bernard Lewis indicates that proposals to switch to the Latin alphabet were decisively rejected in 1923 and 1924. According to Zurcher, “there was still much opposition to the adoption of the Latin script in conservative and religious circles, but from 1925 the opposition was silenced.”¹¹⁴⁵ By the help of the Law on the Maintenance of Order in March 1925, the conservative and socialist press was banned because of their opposition to the Kemalist agenda. In particular, the conservative periodicals *Sebilurresad* and *Sirat-i Mustakim* were very effective before the Law was accepted in the Assembly, but both were banned in March 1925.

The Turkish press was the main center for these questions. In particular in 1924, the debates became very intense. One of the realities in these debates contradicts the assertion of Zurcher. Not only religious circles were against a language reform but also some authors in the Kemalist press in 1924. Especially in *Akbaba* and *Aksam*, there was a great debate between pro-reform and anti-reform movements within the Kemalist circle. On the other hand, the Assembly debates indicate that there were few discussions about alphabet reform in 1924. Only Sukru Saracoglu Bey defended a change in the alphabet in that year. The Law on the Maintenance of Order in March 1925 was a turning point in the alphabet reform. Like the rest of Kemal’s major reforms, the change of the alphabet was a result of this extraordinary period. After the law was effectuated, ideas about language reform became stronger. In 1926, the debates about a language reform sparkled once

¹¹⁴⁴ Lewis, *The Emergence*, 271. Lewis, *The Turkish Language Reform*, 198.

¹¹⁴⁵ Zurcher, *Turkey*, 188.

more in Turkey. The Kemalist government promoted the possible change in alphabet strongly after this year and finally the new alphabet was accepted by the Assembly in 1928.

Alphabet reform was an important subject in the Turkish press in 1924. In *Akbaba*, the recent efforts of Huseyin Cahit Bey were ridiculed by comparing them to the failures in the Second Constitutional Era. The newspaper mentioned about the struggles of Milasli Ismail Hakki Bey. “The poor doctor wasted his breath and money on this subject. He published many pamphlets but who cared about all of these works” Moreover, the newspaper mentioned about the negative effects of the reform of Enver Pasha, which was based on the attempts of Milasli Ismail Hakki, at the beginning of the First World War. *Akbaba* warned Huseyin Cahit Bey his fate would be as same as Milasli Ismail Hakki who was forsaken by his friends because of his failures. *Akbaba* criticized the assertion of Huseyin Cahit Bey that education would be easier after accepting the Latin alphabet.¹¹⁴⁶

Not only some authors in *Akbaba* defended the old script but also the Kemalist newspaper *Aksam*. Celal Esad Bey argued the Turkish script was superior to the Latin script. According to him, the main reason for the failures of reform was not thinking about each problem separately but instead mixing them together. The form of characters, grammar, printing type, terminology, and language issues should be discussed separately. However, the intellectuals mixed all these subjects. Celal Esad Bey pointed out that the old script was not to blame. Even if the Latin alphabet were accepted, the grammar and language problems would not be ended. He indicated that the script which was used by Turks was not Arabic script but Turkish script. He asserted that any Turk could

¹¹⁴⁶ “Latin Harfleri” [Latin Characters], *Akbaba*, 10 Mar. 1924, 1.

read an Arabic text written in fifth century. Moreover, Turks gave their souls and language to the Arabic characters, therefore, the script had become Turkified.¹¹⁴⁷

Not only were advocates opposed to the alphabet reform heard in Kemalist circles in 1924, but there was an important movement in the Kemalist press also. In the column of “Laklakiyat” in *Akbaba*, a very strange proposal appeared. According to the author, the change of script was not enough; the language should be changed totally. It was difficult to accept the Latin script directly; at least some minor changes should be done before accepting it. The author underlined that if the Turkish society wanted to utilize the Western culture and to possess the works created by Europeans, they had to change their language. He recommended accepting French as the language of society. According to him, when French was accepted the language of the society, the society would gain millions of literary works at the same time.¹¹⁴⁸ This idea was the weirdest one heard from the Kemalist press.

Necmeddin Sadik Bey also advocated reform in his column in *Aksam*. He strongly supported the idea of reform proposed by Huseyin Cahid Bey in the newspaper *Tanin*. Moreover, he celebrated a strong disengagement of newly established Turkish Republic from the Islamic world. According to Necmeddin Sadik, Turks would no longer see themselves as a part of Islamic world. Like the rest of the reform, if Turks accepted the Latin script in their literature, it would be

¹¹⁴⁷ Celal Esad, “Turkce Yazı Latin Harflerine Faikdir” [Turkish Script is Superior to Latin Characters], *Aksam*, 11 Mar. 1924, 1.

¹¹⁴⁸ “Harfleri Degil Lisani Degistirmeli” [The Language should be Changed not the Character], *Akbaba*, 20 Mar. 1924, 1.

for the sake of Turkish society. The Turkish state would ignore critics from the Islamic world even in the alphabet reform.¹¹⁴⁹

In 1924, there were very few debates about alphabet reform in the Turkish Grand National Assembly. There was support for alphabet reform in the official reports, but, it was relatively limited. Sukru Saracoglu Bey, one of the devout Kemalists in the Assembly, underlined his support for reform. While the Assembly debated the lack of literacy in Turkey, Sukru Bey blamed Arabic characters as barriers to education. According to him, these characters were not suitable for Turkish writing. Therefore, literacy reached only 2-3% in spite of all the struggles of educators to teach something to people.¹¹⁵⁰ Blaming the Arabic characters as sole reason for a low level of literacy was a characteristic approach of Kemalist deputies.

The Turkish press mostly advocated reform. Not only public periodicals supported reform but also regional. As an example, *Afyonkarahisar'da Nur*, a local magazine published in Afyon, supported a possible reform in language. In his article “Lisanimiza Dair” in *Afyonkarahisar'da Nur*, Tahir Hayrettin mentioned the importance of language reform. According to him, the republic had achieved many goals in the political and administrative areas; but an alphabet reform would be more important. Tahir Hayrettin believed that an alphabet reform would be helpful for improving Turkish culture. A radical reform should be done in grammar, orthography, vocabulary, and script. The purification from foreign words, especially Arabic and Persian, was another key point for Tahir Hayrettin.¹¹⁵¹

¹¹⁴⁹ Necmeddin Sadik, “Hala Yasiyan Batil Fikirler” [The Superstitions which are Still Living on], *Aksam*, 10 Apr. 1924, 1.

¹¹⁵⁰ *TBMM ZC*, 25 Feb. 1924, v.6, 336.

¹¹⁵¹ Tahir Hayreddin, “Lisanimiza Dair” [About Our Language], *Afyonkarahisar'da Nur*, 1 Jun. 1925, 9-11.

In 1926, the debates about a language reform arose once more. When the Turkic republics of the Soviet Union decided to adopt the Latin alphabet after the congress of Turcologists assembled in Baku that same year, this decision gave added impetus to the discussions in Turkey.¹¹⁵² Following this decision, the Minister of Education, Necati Bey, had spoken of the political significance of Romanization.¹¹⁵³ While the Kemalist government showed their interest in possible reform, there was still opposition to language reform in the Kemalist press. However, this opposition became less active by comparison to the opposition in 1924. In this period, the Kemalist press mostly tried to accustom Turkish public opinion to a possible reform. In *Cumhuriyet*, Yunus Nadi declared his support for reform to Latin script. In his article he summarized the debates. He thought that every opinion should be expressed for illumination of public opinion.¹¹⁵⁴ The newspaper *Aksam* started a questionnaire about the Latin script. Some intellectuals advocated language reform. Sekib Bey, professor in the psychology department in Istanbul University, supported language reform. According to him, the current Turkish alphabet was like ‘Chinese shoes’ which were not sufficient for society.¹¹⁵⁵ Refet Avni Bey, literature teacher in Galatasaray High School, indicated that none of the searchers could deny the insufficiency of the Arab script to express the Turkish words. Moreover, he thought that it was better to establish a new style rather than correcting a bad one.¹¹⁵⁶ The most interesting support for a language reform came from Abdullah Cevdet Bey. He assumed that the Latin script was

¹¹⁵² Zurcher, *Turkey*, 188. Lewis, *The Emergence*, 426. Kinross, *Ataturk*, 502.

¹¹⁵³ Lewis, *The Emergence*, 271.

¹¹⁵⁴ Yunus Nadi, “Latin Harfleri” [Latin Characters], *Cumhuriyet*, 20 Mar. 1926, 1.

¹¹⁵⁵ *Aksam*, 26 Mar. 1926, 1.

¹¹⁵⁶ *Aksam*, 3 Apr. 1926, 1.

originally derived from Hittites who were considered forefathers of Turks. Therefore, the Latin script was Turkish script because of its origin.¹¹⁵⁷

On the other hand, there was also opposition among the intellectuals to the alphabet reform. Even though they could not utter their objection loudly because of the Law on the Maintenance of Order, their objections were seen in the Turkish press. Ali Ekrem Bey thought that Latin script was not favorable for the Turkish language. He emphasized that there would not be significant changes if the Latin script was accepted. The main problem for education was the lack of enough primary schools.¹¹⁵⁸ Velid Celebi was also opposed to the Latin script. He underlined that the Latin characters were not proper for expressing the Turkish dialects.¹¹⁵⁹ Avram Galanti, one of the prominent opponents of alphabet reform, was against the Latin script because of the cultural continuity of the Turkish language. According to him, the excellence of the Turkish language could be realized simply by adding some characters to the Arabic script.¹¹⁶⁰ Another concern among the opponents was the demolition of the cultural heritage of the Ottomans by accepting a different script. Necib Asim Bey indicated that the reform would be a farewell to the ‘thirteen centuries long literacy heritage’ of Turkish society; therefore he was against the reform.¹¹⁶¹

The possible alphabet reform was backed by *the New York Times* in 1926. The recent discussions about the alphabet reform were mentioned in the newspaper. *The New York Times* indicated that “in the line with its policy to bring Turkey up to Western standards of education and culture, the Nationalist Government had decided to introduce the Roman alphabet in place of the

¹¹⁵⁷ *Aksam*, 6 Apr. 1926, 1.

¹¹⁵⁸ *Aksam*, 30 Mar. 1926, 1.

¹¹⁵⁹ *Aksam*, 14 Apr. 1926, 1.

¹¹⁶⁰ *Aksam*, 4 Apr. 1926, 1.

¹¹⁶¹ *Aksam*, 2 Apr. 1926, 1.

present cumbrous Arabic characters.” While for a time the future change could entail great confusion and expense, the Kemalist Government thought that this decision would hasten the linguistic unity of the country which it had sought so long.¹¹⁶²

While the idea of abandoning the Arabic script entirely and replacing it with the Latin alphabet was rejected 1923 and 1924, the situation had changed in the Kemalist circle by 1927. Bernard Lewis points out that “The Kemalist regime was now firmly in the saddle, and in possession of virtually dictatorial powers; the religious opposition was cowed and disheartened by a series of crushing blows. A new factor of some importance was the decision of the Soviet authorities to adopt the Latin alphabet in place of the Arabic for the Turkic languages of the USSR, thus providing both an example and an incentive to the government of the Turkish Republic.” The Kemalist Government prepared itself for a reform in alphabet during 1927, but nothing was heard in public until January 1928. Mahmud Esad Bey, Minister of Justice, made a speech in which he praised the merits of the Latin script on January 8, 1928. After Mahmud Esad Bey, the Minister of Education, Hamdullah Suphi Bey declared that “the adoption of the Latin letters is for us a necessity” the next day.¹¹⁶³

The alphabet reform was the last part of deleting the Islamic background of the Turkish society in 1928. In April 1928 the reference to Islam as the state religion was deleted from the constitution, completing the process of legal and constitutional secularization in Turkey. Lewis underlines this process as an important step but not a finished task. He points out that “however, the Arabic script remained as a ‘potent and universal’ symbol of Turkey’s attachment to the Islamic

¹¹⁶² “Roman Alphabet for Turks; Latest of Kemal’s Reforms,” the *New York Times*, 31 Jan. 1926, E1.

¹¹⁶³ Lewis, *The Emergence*, 271- 272.

world."¹¹⁶⁴ The Kemalist administration decided to reform the script in 1928. Debates about an alphabet reform started that year once more again.

Before the reform in script was realized, the first legislative step was taken by the Turkish Grand National Assembly to adopt ‘international numerals’ in place of the Arabic figures which Turkey had previously shared with other Muslim countries on May 20, 1928. After accepting this law in the Assembly, the use of the international numerals became compulsory in all official departments and institutions from June 1. George Lewis emphasizes the ease of this reform as “the Arabic numerals did not have the sanctity of the Arabic letters and there seems to have been little if any opposition.”¹¹⁶⁵ This reform was the last step on the Language Reform in 1928.

When international numerals were discussed in the Grand National Assembly, Kemalist deputies asked for an alphabet reform also. Hasan Fehmi Bey, deputy of Kastamonu, summarized the process of previous reforms. He mentioned that the Kemalist government accepted the Julian calendar a few years before but not international numerals. Hasan Fehmi Bey could not understand that why the government did not accept the numerals along with the Julian calendar. Moreover, the government decided to change the numerals in May 1928 but not attempt a change in alphabet. Hasan Fehmi Bey questioned the undecided approach of the government in this subject. He tried to understand what kind of objections hindered this reform. Muhittin Nami Bey, deputy of Bitlis, was sure that the government would take action for this reform during the next period of the Assembly. According to him, the alphabet reform would be a very important step on the way of progress.¹¹⁶⁶

¹¹⁶⁴ Ibid, 276.

¹¹⁶⁵ Lewis, *The Turkish Language Reform*, 198.

¹¹⁶⁶ *TBMM ZC*, 20 May 1928, v.4, 204- 205.

Sukru Saracoglu, Minister of Finance, agreed with the other deputies. He mentioned that the Turkish Grand National Assembly intended to see the reports of experts in the language commission before accepting a reform. According to him, the government would accept this reform when the commission finished its duties. Mustafa Necati Bey, Minister of Education, pointed out the struggles of the commission also. He suggested that the commission needed time to realize this reform.¹¹⁶⁷

After the international numerals were accepted by the Assembly on May 20, 1928, the Language Commission, which would work for the question of alphabet and grammar, was established in June 1928. The modified Latin alphabet that was adopted in place of the Arabic script was the result of six weeks of work by the Language Commission under the direction of Mustafa Kemal himself.¹¹⁶⁸ According to Falih Rifki Atay, when he put forward the proposal of the new alphabet to Mustafa Kemal, he asked to Falih Rifki Bey what the commission thought about the possibility of this reform. Falih Rifki Bey expressed the two proposals of the commission: the first was a long term plan which would take 15 years, and the second one was five-year-short term plan. However, Mustafa Kemal wished to see the reform immediately, such in three months.¹¹⁶⁹

The Turkish press showed a great interest to the Language Commission's work. *Aksam* mentioned the initiative to implement the Latin alphabet on August 1, 1928. According to the newspaper the efforts of the Commission would end in a few days. *Aksam* illuminated public opinion on the possible changes. The new alphabet would be based on a vowel system. According

¹¹⁶⁷ TBMM ZC, 20 May 1928, v.4, 206.

¹¹⁶⁸ Lewis, *The Emergence*, 272. Lewis, *The Turkish Language Reform*, 32-33. Zurcher, *Turkey*, 188. Davison, *The Modern Nations*, 134.

¹¹⁶⁹ Atay, *Cankaya*, 440.

to this system every vowel would be expressed by a letter. *Aksam* pointed out that there would be no future for the Arabic script. The newspaper mentioned that the commission would not accept any letters which were not used internationally. The editor of *Aksam*, Necmeddin Sadik Bey, expressed that the commission was almost done with its work and the new alphabet would be accepted after a few minor changes.¹¹⁷⁰

When the alphabet was ready after six weeks work, Mustafa Kemal introduced it to the vast crowds attending a Republican People's Party gala in Gulhane Park on the evening of August 9, 1928. Towards eleven o'clock of that night, Mustafa Kemal himself appeared, and after a while he rose to address to the leading figures of the PRP and ordinary people.¹¹⁷¹ In his speech Mustafa Kemal emphasized that the richness of the Turkish language would be understood and seen after the new alphabet spread to the entire country. According to Mustafa Kemal, Turkish people had to free themselves from some of the incomprehensible signs, referring to the Arabic letters, which were a barrier for improvement of education. Moreover, he ordered intellectuals to teach this new alphabet to the ordinary people as soon as possible. Mustafa Kemal thought that it was a shame for a society if only 10% or 20% of them were literate.¹¹⁷² *Aksam* described this gala as a brilliant one and paid attention to Mustafa Kemal's speech. Mustafa Kemal saw the new alphabet reform was an important step towards modernization and *Aksam* welcomed this change warmly.¹¹⁷³

¹¹⁷⁰ "Latin Harflerinin Lisanimiza Tatbiki" [The Implementation of the Latin Alphabet to Our Language], *Aksam*, 1 Aug. 1928, 1. Necmeddin Sadik, "Yeni Harflerin Tatbikati" [The Implementation of the New Letters], *Aksam*, 2 Aug. 1928, 1.

¹¹⁷¹ Kinross, *Ataturk*, 502. Lewis, *The Emergence*, 272. Davison, *The Modern Nations*, 134. Zurcher, *Turkey*, 188-189. Lewis, *The Turkish Language Reform*, 199-200. Kinzer, *Crescent and Star*, 45.

¹¹⁷² Kinross, *Ataturk*, 503.

¹¹⁷³ "Dun Geceki Musamere ve Balo Pek parlak Oldu" [Yesterday's Ceremony and Ball were very Brilliant], *Aksam*, 11 Aug. 1928, 1.

Akbaba, the humor magazine, attacked the Arabic script after Mustafa Kemal's speech. In the caricature of the magazine on August 13, 1928, the Kemalist cliché that Arabic script was a barrier for improvement of education was mentioned again. The magazine announced the change as: "the 'crooked style' Arabic script which was responsible for the illiteracy of people for centuries were replaced by the new Turkish letters." In the caricature, the Latin script was kicking the Arabic script and telling it to "get out to the Sultanate's ruins."¹¹⁷⁴ While the Kemalist press reported the enthusiasm of people for Mustafa Kemal's reform, Andrew Mango indicates that most of the attendees at this party were ordinary people rather than the intellectual elite which were still resistant to the Latin alphabet.¹¹⁷⁵

After the introduction of the Latin alphabet, Mustafa Kemal strove to be a role model for intellectuals. *Aksam* reported how Mustafa Kemal became a role model for the people and worked for this task days and nights. Moreover, the newspaper underlined that the duty of intellectuals would be teaching the new script to the people immediately.¹¹⁷⁶ An alphabet mobilization was proclaimed in the following months by Mustafa Kemal. In September 1928, Mustafa Kemal went on tour in Thrace and Central Anatolia, explaining the new letters and exhorting everyone to learn them quickly and to teach them to their compatriots. He started the new educational campaign in Samsun, the significant place where Mustafa Kemal started his duty in the Turkish War of Independence. After Samsun he visited Tokat, Sivas and some minor cities to show his eagerness to the new alphabet. After the order of Mustafa Kemal, the PM and deputies followed his example, "and soon all Turkey was a schoolroom, which the nation's intellectuals, armed with blackboard

¹¹⁷⁴ *Akbaba*, 13 Aug. 1928, 1.

¹¹⁷⁵ Mango, *Ataturk*, 466.

¹¹⁷⁶ *Aksam*, 14 Aug. 1928, 1.

and easel, teaching the people to read and write the new script.”¹¹⁷⁷ *Aksam* emphasized that 150 deputies were spread out in Turkey for teaching the new reform to the ordinary people.¹¹⁷⁸

The new alphabet reform started among students and soldiers first. The teachers’ training school students became the first center for this reform. Later officers started to teach the new alphabet to soldiers in the military.¹¹⁷⁹ Not only teachers and soldiers started to learn the new script, but the Kemalist government also encouraged local religious commissaries to learn the new alphabet under the supervision of a teacher.¹¹⁸⁰ The Kemalist press started to encourage people’s interests in this reform. *Aksam* mentioned that everyone had started to learn the new letters immediately. In particular illiterate women were more eager to learn the new alphabet than men according to the newspaper *Aksam*.¹¹⁸¹

After the introduction of the new alphabet, newspapers began using the new alphabet for their headlines in August 1928. The newspapers started to publish a few columns in Latin script in mid-August, 1928.¹¹⁸² *Akbaba* changed some of its parts in Latin script on August 23, 1928. In that copy, the editorial, the identification tag of the newspaper, and the name of day was written in Latin script.¹¹⁸³ *Hakimiyet-i Milliye* started to publish the new forms of orthography and letters on this day also. The next day some of the news was published in new alphabet. On September 3, 1928, *Hakimiyet-i Milliye* started to publish one of its columns in Latin script.¹¹⁸⁴ *Aksam* predicted

¹¹⁷⁷ Davison, *The Modern Nations*, 134. Lewis, *The Turkish Language Reform*, 200. Lewis, *The Emergence*, 273.

¹¹⁷⁸ *Aksam*, 8 Sep. 1928, 1.

¹¹⁷⁹ *Aksam*, 18 Aug. 1928, 1. *Aksam*, 22 Aug. 1928, 1.

¹¹⁸⁰ *BCA*, 24 Aug. 1928, Folder no: 51.0.0.0, Document no: 13.108.7. *BCA*, 14 Oct. 1928, Folder no: 51.0.0.0, Document no: 5.46.3.

¹¹⁸¹ *Aksam*, 22 Aug. 1928, 1. *Aksam*, 18 Sep. 1928, 1.

¹¹⁸² *Aksam*, 12 Aug. 1928, 1.

¹¹⁸³ *Akbaba*, 23 Aug. 1928, 1.

¹¹⁸⁴ *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, 27 Aug. 1928, 1. *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, 28 Aug. 1928, 1. *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, 3 Sep. 1928, 1.

that after the implementation of the new law on alphabet reform, newspapers would be partially published in Latin script, but, within one year they would be published completely in Latin script.¹¹⁸⁵ In another copy, *Aksam* announced that before December 1928, the newspapers would be completely published in the new alphabet.¹¹⁸⁶

The local press was also aware of the importance of the alphabet reform. Mustafa Kemal's speech in the RPP's gala in Gulhane Park became a source of motivation for local intellectuals. *Cankiri'da Ince Gelis*, a local newspaper published in Cankiri, announced the significance of Mustafa Kemal's speech. The newspaper underlined the backwardness of Arabic script and shared the Kemalist idea in this reform also.¹¹⁸⁷ *Fikirler*, another local newspaper published in Izmir, supported the language reform also. Mehmet Mithat Bey discussed this reform in his article in *Fikirler*. According to the author the new alphabet spread among intellectuals after it was accepted and encouraged by the Turkish genius, Mustafa Kemal. Mehmet Mithat Bey underlined that when the Turkish Savior, Mustafa Kemal, decided to accept the Latin alphabet to complete the civilization and to transform the society in a Westernized style, objections to this reform were stopped and the Government took a decision to encourage the reform. Mehmet Mithat Bey confessed that intellectuals in the Turkish press did not show a great sympathy for the Latin script until that time. These intellectuals had some concerns about a change of the alphabet. First of all the old script was seen as a symbol of identity. Secondly, they expressed concern over losing the new generation's attention to old documents if the alphabet was changed. The third concern was not expressing Turkish, which had been mixed with Persian and Arabic for centuries, very well

¹¹⁸⁵ *Aksam*, 22 Aug. 1928, 1.

¹¹⁸⁶ *Aksam*, 27 Sep. 1928, 1.

¹¹⁸⁷ *Cankiri'da Ince Gelis*, 19 Aug. 1928, 1.

with only twenty letters. However, after the Great Savior's decree, these rejections were cut off and the mobilization was started. The branches of the People's Party, Turkish Hearths, the Teachers' Association, and the rest of the societies only waited on the end of the Commission's tasks for this mobilization.¹¹⁸⁸

Finally the language commission prepared a new dictionary which had 25,000 words and sent it to Mustafa Kemal on October 29, 1928. The new dictionary and alphabet was discussed a few days later in the Assembly. The change was formalized by the Turkish Republic's law number 1353, the Law on the Adoption and Implementation of the Turkish Alphabet, passed on November 1, 1928, in the Turkish Grand National Assembly. The Kemalist Government preferred to refer this new alphabet as Turkish script instead of Latin script when it was introduced into the Assembly. The Government was identified this new script as "the key which would enable the people of Turkey to read and write easily."¹¹⁸⁹

Debate on the Law on the Adoption and Implementation of the Turkish Alphabet, was held in the Assembly, in where there was no opposition to the Kemalist regime, on November 1, 1928. The Assembly debates prove that the Kemalist cadres was sure that the new alphabet would solve the illiteracy problem within a few years. In the opening ceremony of the new period, Mustafa Kemal expressed the goals of the regime. Education played an important part in that speech. Mustafa Kemal pointed out that the results of their struggles in education allowed them to take radical decisions. Mustafa Kemal described the importance of language reform as: "... the Turkish nation can escape from illiteracy in a short time by accepting a reform which is suitable for its

¹¹⁸⁸ Mehmet Mithat, "Yeni harfler" [The New Letters], *Fikirler*, 1 Sep. 1928, 1.

¹¹⁸⁹ Zurcher, *Turkey*, 189. Lewis, *The Emergence*, 273. Yerasimos, "The Monoparty Period," 86 Lewis, *The Turkish Language Reform*, 201. Kinross, *Ataturk*, 505.

beautiful and noble language. The key for this achievement is alone the adaptation of the Latin alphabet.”¹¹⁹⁰ Mustafa Kemal asserted that the success of the Latin alphabet among the Turkish people who lived in the cities and villages was seen after a few experiences. He also mentioned the duties of the intellectuals. Literate cadres should teach the new alphabet to the illiterate majority even in their personal lives. Mustafa Kemal was sure that the centuries-long illiteracy problem of Turkish society would be solved within a few years. The reform in the alphabet was one of the radical decisions of the Kemalist regime. Mustafa Kemal thought that this reform would be a key solution to solve the illiteracy problem in Turkey. According to him, after a few experiments, the Turkish people who lived in cities or villages were easily taught the new alphabet. Finally, Mustafa Kemal congratulated the Assembly for their decision. He was sure that the importance of this decision would be written not only in Turkish history but also the history of humanity.¹¹⁹¹

Ismet Pasha, the PM of the Kemalist Government, declared he was sure that Turkey would be on a bright path after accepting this reform. According to the PM this initiative aimed to solve illiteracy. Ismet Pasha was sure like Mustafa Kemal that the adaptation of the Latin alphabet provided an easy means to destroy ignorance. Ismet Pasha pointed out that Turkish nation had been looking for a key to solve the illiteracy problem for a long time, so it showed great enthusiasm for this reform. The PM underlined the importance of the national schools which would be the key instrument of educational mobilization. Ismet Pasha guaranteed that the government would teach the new alphabet to the ordinary people, who were busy with their works in factories and fields, by the help of the national schools. The government would help teachers with new educational means for realizing the goal of this campaign. Not only were the teachers responsible for this

¹¹⁹⁰ *TBMM ZC*, 1 Nov. 1928, v. 5, 4.

¹¹⁹¹ *TBMM ZC*, 1 Nov. 1928, v. 5, 4-6. *Ayin Tarihi 18 [History of Month 18]*, Nov. 1928, 56.

achievement but also all officials and intellectuals. All these groups would be busy with this goal over next few years.¹¹⁹²

Not only was the PM sure the language reform would be a great success but also some of the MPs. Mehmet Emin Bey, deputy of Sarkikarahisar, believed that after accepting this reform the gap between the common people and intellectuals would be decreased. This new alphabet would motivate the 14 million population of Turkey with a great enthusiasm. The intellectuals and common people established a unity on the way to modernize after this reform.¹¹⁹³

Refik Bey, deputy of Konya, was one of the MPs in favor of the alphabet change. Like the rest of the MPs, he started to his speech by exalting the cult of Mustafa Kemal. According to Refik Bey, all these good works came from Mustafa Kemal's mind. This reform was credited to Mustafa Kemal who was the pride of the twentieth century. While he was struggling to prepare an honorable and lofty status for his nation in war and peace time, he realized the alphabet reform would achieve educational goals in the future. Refik Bey uttered the Kemalist cliché one more in his speech also. According to this cliché, the Arabic script was one of the biggest reasons for the backwardness of Turkish society. Refik Bey mentioned that the great Savior – Mustafa Kemal - would lead the society to a lofty status after this reform.¹¹⁹⁴

After the law was passed, 'the Turkish letters' were mandatory for all government departments and commercial and private institutions at once. Newspapers were printed in Arabic script for the last time on December 1, 1928. Finally, the law mandated the use of the new alphabet

¹¹⁹² *TBMM ZC*, 1 Nov. 1928, v. 5, 7- 8.

¹¹⁹³ *TBMM ZC*, 1 Nov. 1928, v. 5, 9.

¹¹⁹⁴ *TBMM ZC*, 1 Nov. 1928, v. 5, 8-9.

in all public communications after January 1, 1929. The final deadline for changing all printed documents and ending the use of Arabic script as shorthand for stenographs was June 1, 1930.¹¹⁹⁵

While the Kemalist deputies described the positive sides of the alphabet reform in general, there were some negative effects discussed in the press. The print run of newspapers was dramatically down after they were forced to be published in the new Latin alphabet. Henry Elisha Allen points out that “with the suddenness of the change, most publications were deprived of virtually their entire reading public”, therefore, the government had to spend hundreds of thousands of liras to subsidize newspapers and other periodicals.¹¹⁹⁶ The Assembly debates also show the hard condition of the Turkish press after the change in the script. Debates about the incentive payments took place on June 2, 1929. Hakki Tarik Bey, deputy of Giresun and owner of the Kemalist *Vakit* newspaper, gave a proposal to the Assembly to give bonuses to newspapers still publishing when the reform was accepted. In the proposal, the newspapers which were printed by rotary press would be granted 5,000 Turkish liras and the others would be granted 1,500 Turkish liras by the government. Talat Bey, deputy of Ankara, opposed this huge amount of money and suggested that 1,000 liras would be enough for these newspapers. In his speech, he suggested that the government could not help the poor citizens enough; therefore, these newspapers should be tolerant of the government’s decisions. Hakki Tarik Bey expressed the urgency of the government’s help due to heavy conditions of the alphabet reform on the Turkish press. After these discussions the proposal was rejected by the Grand National Assembly.¹¹⁹⁷ The Turkish press encountered by the great difficulties after the untimely reform. The result of this lack was a

¹¹⁹⁵ Allen, *The Turkish Transformation*, 125-126. Lewis, *The Turkish Language Reform*, 201. Lewis, *The Emergence*, 273. Kinross, *Ataturk*, 505.

¹¹⁹⁶ Allen, *The Turkish Transformation*, 126.

¹¹⁹⁷ *TBMM ZC*, 2 Jun. 1929, v.12, 271- 272.

dramatic fall of the numbers of the total newspapers in Turkey. According to Nisanyan, total issues of daily newspapers in the late Ottoman Empire was around 100,000. However, this number declined to 40,000 in 1925, and finally to 20,000 at the end of 1928.¹¹⁹⁸

Mustafa Kemal and other prominent figures in his party were certain about the rapid success of the language reform, but literacy did not increase monotonically throughout his presidency. Stefanos Yerasimos reports: “It (the alphabet reform) was accompanied by a great crusade against illiteracy, and the new alphabet was presented as a panacea against ignorance. Yet, a quick glance at educational statistics does not provide justification for such enthusiasm. According to the census of 1927, there were 6,043 primary schools nationwide; the number rose to 6,598 four year later. Similarly, secondary schools increased from 78 to 83, and lycees from 19 to 22, during that same period. It is true that the rate of illiteracy decreased between the census of 1927 and that of 1935, but only from 90 to 80 percent.”¹¹⁹⁹

According to Ersin Kalaycioglu, “The lingering problems of education indicate that the literacy rate of the country has been sensitive to nontechnical, and more socioeconomic and cultural factors.”¹²⁰⁰ These socioeconomic and cultural factors could be understood very well if the literacy rate of the period of Mustafa Kemal and afterwards were compared. According to governmental statistics, in 1927 the population of Turkey was 13,650,000 and 1,106,000 of the total population was literate. In 1935, while the total population increased 16,157,000, the literate people increased to 2,453,000. In this period, it could be said there was a doubling in the number of literate people. However, if we look at the total numbers in the 1960s and 1970s, people showed

¹¹⁹⁸ Nisanyan, *Yanlis Cumhuriyet*, 156.

¹¹⁹⁹ Yerasimos, “*The Monoparty Period*,” 86.

¹²⁰⁰ Kalaycioglu, *Turkish Dynamics*, 58.

more interest to the education. In 1960, there were 27,755,000 people in Turkey and the total literate population was 8,901,000. In 1970, the total population increased to 35,605,000 and the total literate population to 16,455,000. From this perspective, it could be said that not only the educational campaign was important for increasing the literacy in the society, but also the need of people for education. Sevan Nisanyan interprets this reality as: "...although the national educational campaign was continuing insistently, just only 10.3% illiterate people became literate during this campaign." Nisanyan underlines that the extraordinary campaign of the Kemalist regime could not as successful as the increased rate of the literacy in 1960s. Therefore, he does not think that the alphabet reform is enough only for covering the illiteracy problem in Turkey.¹²⁰¹

In conclusion, replacing the Arabic script with the Latin script enabled the turn of Turkey towards to the West. The main Kemalist assertion in this reform was the inappropriateness of the Arabic script for authentic Turkish phonology, which needed a new set of symbols to be correctly represented. The common idea among the Kemalist scholars is the Arabic script was an obstacle to the progress of education because of its difficulties to be learned easily by the Turkish people. Moreover, the Arabic script is considered as restraining the spread of Western thought in society.¹²⁰² The idea of switching to the Latin alphabet was defended openly first time in the Second Constitutional Period.¹²⁰³ Moreover, this topic were discussed in 1923 and 1924, but decisively rejected. After 1925, when the Kemalists got full control of the state, the modernization of education became a part of their reform movement. The change of the script became available in 1928.

¹²⁰¹ Nisanyan, *Yanlis Cumhuriyet*, 155-156.

¹²⁰² Ozgen, *Cagdas Egitim ve Koy Enstituleri*, 29.

¹²⁰³ Berkes, *Development of Secularism*, 422.

4.4.3 Schools of the Nation (Millet Mektepleri)

After the Law on the Adoption and Implementation of the Turkish Alphabet was passed in the Turkish Grand National Assembly, an educational campaign was started by the Government. The name of the new organization for the literacy drive was ‘Millet Mektepleri,’ the Schools of the Nation, which was necessary for adults.¹²⁰⁴ The Schools of the Nation were established after the ‘Directive of Schools of the Nation’ was passed by the Minister of Education, Mustafa Necati Bey on November 11, 1928.¹²⁰⁵ In the directive Mustafa Necati Bey stated that every Turkish citizen between the ages of 16-45 had to join the Millet Mektepleri and this was mandatory. The goal of these schools was to create a literate population- from those who could not read and write at all to those who could do so only in the old characters. The third article of the directive declared that “Every male and female Turkish citizen is a member of this organization.” Therefore, the entire nation literally went to school, for adults were obliged to learn the new writing as well as schoolchildren. For teaching the new script to the adults, evening classes were opened. The fourth article of this directive declared that “the chief instructor of the Schools of Nation is His Excellency the President of the Republic, Ghazi Mustafa Kemal.”¹²⁰⁶ These schools began to operate on January 1th, 1929.¹²⁰⁷

The Schools of the Nation became the core of the educational campaign of the Kemalist regime. The Assembly debates prove that the Kemalist leaders attached great importance to these schools. Moreover, they were certain of the success of these schools in a near future. Before its

¹²⁰⁴ Heper, *Historical Dictionary*, 54.

¹²⁰⁵ *BCA*, 11 Nov. 1928, Folder no: 7284, Document no: 1.1.13.

¹²⁰⁶ Turer, *Türk Egitim Tarihi*, 288. Davison, *The Modern Nations*, 134-135. Orga, *Phoenix Ascendant*, 171. Lewis, *The Emergence*, 273. Kinross, *Ataturk*, 505. *TBMM ZC*, 8 Nov. 1928, v.5, 26.

¹²⁰⁷ *BCA*, 25 Dec. 1928, Folder no: 490.1.0.0, Document no: 1.2.13.

establishment, the importance of the schools of the nation was defended by Ismet Pasha, the PM of the Kemalist Government, in the Turkish Grand National Assembly also. In his speech Ismet Pasha emphasized that the government would establish these mobile schools for teaching the new alphabet to ordinary people while they could stay at their residence or engage in work. These schools would be mobile and spread all over the state, in the cities and villages. The government would organize two or four month courses to educate ordinary people who could not have a chance to go to a learning institution. Ismet Pasha declared that all officials from the highest rank to the lowest would be busy with this educational mobilization. According to the Prime Minister, the government decided to educate a few hundred thousand people who did not have a chance to go to schools.¹²⁰⁸

There were two types of courses in the schools of the nation. The first one was for illiterate people which lasted four months. The second one was for literate people in the old style and lasted two months. These schools could be mobile for reaching everybody. Especially at the end of 1928 and early 1929 there were many schools of the nation were established within the country. At the beginning the only goal of these schools was teaching the new alphabet to ordinary people. In September 1929, the structure of these schools was changed. After that time, not only the alphabet was taught but also useful knowledge about social and economic life.¹²⁰⁹

The results of the schools of the nation were seen as positive by the Kemalist authorities. Successes of these schools were mentioned in the Turkish Grand National Assembly several times. As an example, while Ismet Pasha was talking about the effects of the extraordinary laws, he

¹²⁰⁸ *TBMM ZC*, 8 Nov. 1928, v.5, 26.

¹²⁰⁹ Ersoy Tasdemirci, *Türk Egitim Tarihi [History of Turkish Education]*, (Ankara: Gunduz Egitim ve Yayıncılık, 2010), 143.

emphasized the language reform also. In his speech, he pointed out that there were almost one million men and women learning to read and write their native language in these schools at that time. Another speech was given by Emin Bey, deputy of Eskisehir on May 18, 1929. According to Emin Bey, after the alphabet reform the Government educated 70% of the total population in a year, something which could be only possible in fifty years.¹²¹⁰ This is one of the greatest exaggerations of the Kemalist reform in the alphabet reform. As we know, the total achievement in educating people was rather lower than this assertion. Nisanyan refutes this assertion as only 10.3% of the total population had a chance to be literate after the great propaganda and the literacy drive of the Kemalist regime.¹²¹¹

Mustafa Kemal was also sure about the great successes of the schools of the nation. In the opening speech of the new term of the Turkish Grand National Assembly, he emphasized that the schools of the nation educated hundreds of thousands of Turkish citizens and eliminated early difficulties.¹²¹² However, these schools lost their dynamism after 1932. While the first year of the literacy drive was relatively successful, due to the global economic crisis there was insufficient funding and the drive lasted only three years.¹²¹³

In conclusion, education was one of the important pillars of the Kemalist modernization. Education was seen as an important apparatus to create a new generation trained in Kemalist doctrine by many Kemalist scholars. Nationalist and secular education was the main goal for the Kemalist regime in 1920s and 1930s. For creating a secular education, the Kemalist cadres tried

¹²¹⁰ *TBMM ZC*, 18 May 1929, v.12, 21- 26.

¹²¹¹ Nisanyan, *Yanlis Cumhuriyet*, 155-156.

¹²¹² *TBMM ZC*, 1 Nov. 1929, v.13, 3.

¹²¹³ *BCA*, 3 Dec. 1929, Folder no: 13915, Document no: 142.16.15. *BCA*, 29 Dec. 1929, Folder no: 7244, Document no: 64.431.43. Tasdemirci, *Türk Egitim Tarihi*, 144.

to eliminate religious education from the educational system. This ideological attempt started in the second period of the Assembly from August 1923 to April 1927. During this period, Kemalists strengthened their power in politics and their attempts to change the educational structure were directly proportional to their power. The most important educational reform of this period was the Law for the Unification of Education in March 1924.

The Kemalist ideological approach in education was seen in the abolition of madrasas as well. The Kemalist regime destroyed the madrasas, the traditional religious schools in the Ottoman Empire, in March 1924. However, before this closure Kemalists had expressed many contradictions in this subject. During the period of the Ankara Government and afterward, the Kemalist regime established many local madrasas from 1920 to 1923. Moreover, they supported the Darulhilafe Madrasa, a reformed style religious school, in 1922. Moreover, Darulhilafe Madrasa was initially seen as a vital institution in where the local imams would be educated by the Kemalist authorities. While Kemalist government was in favor of madrasas and duality in education from 1920 to 1924, Huseyin Avni Bey, the leader of the Second Group, was totally against them. Huseyin Avni Bey emphasized the dichotomy in the educational system. According to him, the programs of schools were erroneous, and the Darulhilafe Madrasas and other schools were deficient. The discord between these two different style schools caused many problems. From this perspective, the notion of Huseyin Avni Bey was more progressive than the Kemalist leaders.

One of the ideological reforms of the Kemalist regime was the change of script in 1928. It is clear that the Kemalist radicalism achieved the deletion Islamic background of the Turkish society at that year. The first step in this year was eliminating state religion. In April 1928 the reference to Islam as the state religion was deleted from the constitution, completing the process of legal and constitutional secularization in Turkey. Lewis underlines this process as an important

step but not a finished task. He points out that "...however, the Arabic script remained as a 'potent and universal' symbol of Turkey's attachment to the Islamic world."¹²¹⁴ The Kemalist administration was so decisive to make a reform in the script in 1928. This was a radical attack to destroy the Islamic heritage of the Turkish society.

After the Law on the Adoption and Implementation of the Turkish Alphabet was passed in the Turkish Grand National Assembly, the educational campaign was started by the Government. The new organization used in the literacy drive was 'Millet Mektepleri,' the Schools of the Nation. These schools became the center of Kemalist education. The Kemalist government paid a great importance to these schools. However, because of economic limitations, these schools lost their importance in 1929. When the positive effects of the schools of the nation diminished, the Kemalist government sought new solutions for public education. However, all these literacy drives could not solve the educational problems in Turkey during the Presidency of Mustafa Kemal.

¹²¹⁴ Lewis, *The Emergence*, 276.

Chapter 5 - Conclusion

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk remains an important figure in the Turkish political and social landscape even today. Most of Kemalist scholars who have studied the Kemalist modernization in the early Republican era have given a huge credit to Mustafa Kemal as establishing a democratic regime in Turkey. This Kemalist orthodoxy, which is based on Mustafa Kemal's six-day long speech (Nutuk) delivered in October 1927, advocates that Kemalist ideology sought to create a modern, democratic and secular nation-state and emphasizes the foundation of the Republic in 1923 as one of the most important steps on the way of Turkish democracy. However, the Assembly debates prove that Mustafa Kemal utilized every single event to establish an autocracy instead of a democratic regime. The Law of Supreme Commander Act in August 1921, the abolition of Sultanate in 1922, the establishment of Republic in 1923, the abolition of Caliphate in 1924, and the elimination of opposition in 1925 were the key events on the way of the establishment of this personal autocracy.

The Law of Supreme Commander Act of 1921 was the first milestone on the way of the Kemalist autocracy. The desperate conditions of Turkish army after the Battle of Kutahya and Eskisehir in July 1921, gave a chance to Mustafa Kemal to expand his power in the state. This difficult crisis of the state gave an opportunity for personal gain, military success, and national survival to Mustafa Kemal after centralizing the entire authority of the Grand National Assembly to his hands. The Supreme Commander Act of 1921, Law 144, was accepted on August 5, 1921, for a period of three months by the Kemalist majority in the Assembly. According to the second article of the Supreme Commander Act of 1921, Mustafa Kemal Pasha would be the single authority in legislative, executive, and judicial matters. He would undertake the duties of the Assembly for three months after this act would be implemented. This situation enabled Mustafa

Kemal to be a military dictator for the next three months. The Assembly debates prove that the probability of establishing a dictatorship was a concern of many deputies. Not only opponents but even some Kemalist deputies had also the same concern.

Mustafa Kemal's opponents were aware of his desire for absolute power. The Assembly debates prove that the opposition to the Kemalist majority in the Assembly, adamantly rejected any kind of personal autocracy and military dictatorship. In every extension, opponents showed their dissatisfaction with giving an unlimited authority to Mustafa Kemal by this act. While, opponents all agreed on the importance of this act during the war, they thought that giving all authority to a person was a danger for a nation. The Assembly debates prove that how the opposition did not see any person as superior to the Assembly, and not transfer their rights, which were given by people to them, to an individual person. While the opponents showed their dissatisfaction with this decision, Mustafa Kemal kept the title of the Supreme Commander until the Republic was established in October 1923.

The abolition of the Ottoman Sultanate in November 1922 was a significant change in the political structure of Turkey. This was another milestone on the way of the Kemalist autocracy. While the Kemalist historiography indicates that Mustafa Kemal had an explicit and coherent plan in this change, the Assembly debates prove that Kemalist regime had a lot of zigzags in the abolition of Ottoman sultanate. At the early stage of the Turkish War of Independence between 1919 and 1922, Mustafa Kemal was seen as a great admirer and follower of the Ottoman Sultanate. He pointed out that the only way to rescue the state and Sultan was the collaboration of all patriots and intellectuals who were deeply upset because of the occupation of state, a horrible situation for the people of the Ottoman Empire. Moreover, Kemalist deputies tried to eliminate all doubt about establishing another government in Ankara. According to Kemalist deputies, the real government

for the members of National Assembly was in Istanbul. The Assembly debates demonstrates that Mustafa Kemal and his allies seemed more loyalist rather than their opponents in this period. The Assembly debates show that members of the National Assembly started their attack directly to the person of Sultan Mehmed VI, especially after the victory of the Turkish army in the Second Battle of Inonu, which gave prestige and power to Mustafa Kemal. Sultan Mehmed VI was seen as a puppet in the hands of the Entente. Thus, the image of “captive Sultan,” which was depicted by Kemalists in the first stage of the war, was destroyed by them after April 1921. The Kemalists’ attacks on Sultan Mehmed VI started as describing him a coward in mid of 1921; then they became harsher in mid-1922, and the Sultan was described as a killer and traitor at the end.

Mustafa Kemal’s decision about establishing a republic in October 1923 was another opportunist action which helped to strengthen his position and an important milestone towards the establishment of Kemalist autocracy. When the Ottoman Sultanate was abolished in November 1922, the political structure of the new emerging Turkish state was still somewhat indeterminate. Turkey was ruled by the National Assembly, which elected not only the president but also every minister directly. This system was a barrier to Mustafa Kemal’s controlling the entire system because of the opposition’s power during these elections.

Establishing the Republic of Turkey became possible after the government crisis, which was an intentional crisis which aimed to show the so-called weakness of the previous system of government in October 1923. Declaring the Republic was a *fait accompli* which was rejected by a significant number of deputies in the Grand National Assembly. The Assembly debates prove that they were not in favor of this decision because of its haste. When the Assembly gathered on October 29, 1923, only members loyal to Mustafa Kemal were in the Assembly. Even though there was only a single party in the Assembly at that time, Mustafa Kemal’s opponents within the

People's Party were not in Ankara when the Republic was declared. Mustafa Kemal was elected as the first President of Turkey by 158 votes. He was elected unanimously in the Assembly, but 132 members of Assembly were absent.

While the Kemalist orthodoxy asserts public support for the decision to establish a Republic, this is another Kemalist distortion. The Turkish Press in Istanbul showed its reluctance to the establishment of a republic. According to the newspapers in Istanbul, the decision was taken in haste and not discussed enough by society. The opposition in Istanbul warned the Kemalist government that the republic could not survive with clapping, prayers, and carnivals if it did not change the mentalities of the statesmen. The criticism by the Istanbul press of the rapid change of the form of the government was shared by some of pro-Kemalist press also. They had some concerns about the formation of the new regime, seeing urgency as a handicap.

After the abolition of the Sultanate in November 1922, the traditional power of religious authorities diminished but not totally end. The Kemalist regime was aware of the potential rivalry of the Caliphate to its ideological identity. The political competition between Ankara and Istanbul made the office of Caliphate the center of opposition to the Kemalist government. The Caliph was still considered as the head of the state by the common Turkish people and this situation was unacceptable to Mustafa Kemal. Therefore, he broke his ties with this long-run traditional power after the Peace Treaty at Lausanne was signed in July 1923. The abolition of the Ottoman Caliphate in March 1924 was the final attack in changing political structure of the Ottoman society and was another milestone on the way of the Kemalist autocracy.

The Assembly debates display that the Kemalist attitude to the Caliphate was positive at the early stage of the National Struggle. Kemalist deputies published a declaration against to the British occupation on May 9, 1920. In this declaration, Kemalists underlined that one of goals of

the British invasion was the annihilation of Caliphate. Moreover, the importance of the Caliphate was stressed many times by the deputies – both Kemalists and their opposition- in the Grand National Assembly. However, this attitude was changed after the establishment of the Turkish Republic in October 1923.

The Kemalist orthodoxy asserts that the Caliphate had no real function. Moreover, Mustafa Kemal declared that “the caliphate was in every way a liability to Turkey, that a Moslem union was a historic unreality, and that all attempts to bring Moslems together would only deflect Turkey from her supreme obligation toward her own interests.” During the discussions in the Assembly, Kemalists believed that the Office of Caliphate was useless, because during World War I Indian Muslim soldiers did not halt their attacks against Turkish soldiers fighting under the banner of the Caliphate. However, Kemalist deputies did not raise the help of Indian Muslims to the Turkish War of Independence, seen as a sacred war by Indian Muslims. For example, when peace negotiations in Lausanne was standstill, Indian Muslims threatened the British Government if it started a war against Turkey. Moreover, the opposition pointed out that the Muslims were brothers in Islam in the parliamentary discussions. They believed that other Muslim nations respected Turks for supporting the Caliphate with their struggles for centuries.

While the Kemalist orthodoxy explains the abolition of the Caliphate as a good deed, this strategy may not have been successful for the newly established Kemalist regime. The political power of the Caliphate against the British did not use in the Mosul Question. Besides, the abolition of the Caliphate would destroy the traditional loyalty of Kurds to the Turkish state. Kemalists ignored Kurdish disappointment with the decision to cut religious ties between these two nations. The consequence was the Sheikh Said Rebellion in the Kurdish region of Turkey in 1925 because of the Kemalist dismissal of the concerns of Kurds.

Abolition of the Caliphate was one the main reason of the Sheikh Said Rebellion started on February 13, 1925 and spread out rapidly in eastern Turkey. The Assembly debates prove that the Kemalist attitude changed frequently during the rebellion. While Kemalists initially blamed the rebellion as a reactionary uprising, their view shifted to a nationalist reaction which was backed by the British Government at the end. The Rebellion provided a good justification for the Kemalist regime to expel its opponents from the politics and press. Therefore, the rebellion was a turning point in establishing Kemalist autocracy. The Kemalist majority used the Sheikh Said Rebellion to establish the Law on the Maintenance of Order in March 1925. This Law gave extraordinary and dictatorial powers to the Kemalist government for two years and effectively served the Kemalist regime in crushing political opposition, silencing critical journalists and rushing through the cultural reforms. The Progressive Republican Party, which was the first opposition party in the Republican Era, was banned because of Kemalist assertion of a relationship between the rebels and the opposition party. Besides, freedom of press suffered a blow after the Law on the Maintenance of Order was accepted by the Assembly. The Kemalist regime's long term dissatisfaction with the Istanbul press was fulfilled after this law was effectuated. The ban on conservative and socialist publications left the Kemalist press as the only source of information. This blow paralyzed the activities of the opposition against the Kemalist authoritarianism. The final blow came after the 1926 plot to assassinate Mustafa Kemal in Izmir.

Kemalist historiography credits Mustafa Kemal Atatürk with the original and unique conception of the social, legal, and educational reforms of the early Republican period, however this approach is not balanced. Although the Kemalist historiography asserts that Mustafa Kemal and his legacy represent carrying out Enlightenment ideals in an obsolete society almost totally ignorant of these principles, the Kemalist modernization got a great inheritance from its

predecessors, the Young Turks. Therefore, the Kemalist overstatement of an idealist figure of Mustafa Kemal is wrong in some degree. Besides, these reforms were launched and implemented by the Kemalist Government in a Jacobin way after the establishment of the Kemalist single-party regime, which was ensured by the help of the extraordinary laws in the political structure of Turkey in 1925.

The authoritarian Kemalist regime tried to change people's traditional costumes, institutions, and beliefs in a harsh way by the help of strict laws. The hat law of 1925 was the first attempt to change people's headgears during the Kemalist regime. The main motive in Kemalists' mind in this reform was that participation in European civilization would be possible by changing the outer appearance of the Turkish people. While Kemalists wanted to adapt Turkish people to Western headgear, there was a strong objection to this reform from the religious circles. Muslim Ottomans had a strong belief about hats as a symbol of Christianity and they thought that hat was not appropriate during the prayer.

The Assembly debates prove the political struggle between Kemalist reformers and conservatives in this reform. As an example, when Kemalists were not enough strong in politics, the first Kemalist initiative to change the headdress failed. On April 29, 1920, Kemalists tried to remove the fez and accept the kalpak as the national headdress. Even though the kalpak was appropriate for daily prayers, this Kemalist resolution was rejected fiercely by the conservative deputies. However, when the Kemalist regime became stronger after the Law on the Maintenance of Order in March 1925, the reform in the headdress was debated in the Assembly on November 25, 1925 again. Assembly debates show that there was a minor objection to this reform. When Nureddin Pasha opposed this bill because of its contradiction to the constitution on grounds of free will and freedom of speech, the Kemalist deputies showed a great anger to this approach. Their

attitude toward Nureddin Pasha was to silence him as soon as possible. Moreover, the Kemalist press attacked Nureddin Pasha also likewise Kemalist deputies in the Assembly. The Kemalist press condemned him as a reactionary who did not hold a position in the Assembly.

While the Kemalist orthodoxy asserts that the Kemalist regime accepted the Hat Law of 1925 as a demand of people, historical records prove that Turkish people resisted this reform. The religious concerns of people about accepting headgear associated with infidels until that time caused both active and passive resistance among them by protesting the Government. In particular some of the Anatolian cities, like Erzurum, Rize, Maras, resisted this change by not accepting to wear hats. Their resistance was stopped by the Independence Tribunals in December 1925. Therefore, people's freedom not to wear hats was dismissed by the Government by force.

Beyond the dress code, the Kemalist Government banned the dervish lodges and convents, which were the main socializing venues for people for many centuries. Instead of reforming them, Kemalist Government chose to destroy these institutions completely in 1925. According to Kemalist reformers, all of these religious orders and dervish lodges were obsolete. The Assembly debates show that Kemalist deputies denounced dervish lodges as the tools of poisonous efforts and main sources of treachery. Besides, they condemned these institutions as sources of the ideological fanaticism. However, this interpretation was not true. When some of the dervish lodges deteriorated, most of them were useful during the Turkish War of Independence. They supported the nationalist movement in Anatolia.

Traditional customs and laws were also changed by the Kemalist regime. One of the important reforms during the Kemalist modernization was a new Civil Code for the state in 1926. The secularization of the legal structure of the Ottoman Empire was seen in the Tanzimat Era the first time. The Mecelle served as the civil code of the Ottoman Empire until the Swiss Civil Code

was accepted as a new civil code by Kemalists. It was the first attempt to codify a part of the Sharia-based law in an Islamic state. Assembly debates show that Kemalist reformers changed their opinions about the Mecelle many times. The Kemalist leadership had an idea to reform the Mecelle between 1920 and 1923, but their thought changed at the end of 1923. Debates in the Assembly indicated that the Mecelle was evaluated as insufficient by Kemalist leaders at the end of 1923, and they sought to replace Mecelle with another civil code.

While the radical wing of Kemalist party wanted a significant change in Islamic laws, Assembly debates prove that many Kemalists had a gradual change in this area in 1924. When Mustafa Kemal and his associates tried to set up new commissions in the Ministry of Justice to change the old legal system in 1924, members of these commissions did not accept foreign laws at the beginning. In Assembly debates, the approach of Seyid Bey was very interesting. As Minister of Justice and a staunch Kemalist Seyid Bey was looking for a moderate change in the civil code instead of a sudden change in 1924. Moreover, the Kemalist Minister believed that there were two different laws in the world and Islamic law was not easily disregarded. This attitude was common some of the Kemalist deputies in the Assembly in 1924. While the commission and the Minister of the Justice preferred gradual change, Mustafa Kemal wanted to change society rapidly after 1925.

Assembly debates prove that Kemalists disregarded Islamic law completely when the Swiss Civil Code was accepted. The religious character of Mecelle was a problem for the Kemalist parliamentarians. According to Kemalist mentality, societies which were based on a religious law were in an early stage and would never progress. Therefore, Kemalists would not tie the destiny of Turkish people to medieval laws. This situation was a victory of radical wing in the Kemalist party. Assembly debates reveal many contradictions of Kemalist deputies during the legal reforms.

As an example, Sukru Kaya, a prominent Kemalist deputy, blamed Ottoman governments for not accepting any change in the civil code. However, the Mecelle was the civil code during the last period of the Ottoman Empire, but Sukru Kaya ignored this point. Besides, Yusuf Kemal Bey, another Kemalist deputy, condemned the Mecelle as it was accepted without popular demands, ignoring that there was not any demand from the public for this Kemalist reform also.

Women's rights was one of the admirable issues for many Kemalists, but many contradictions in this area hindered its effectiveness. One of the main Kemalist assertions is that Turkish women got most of their rights from the Kemalist regime. It is true that the women's revolution was a significant part of Kemalism. However, the contribution of the Kemalist regime to women's rights is exaggerated by staunch Kemalists. This Kemalist orthodoxy asserts that if Mustafa Kemal did not exist, perhaps they would not exist. Moreover, this approach asserts that the condition of women and their rights actually deteriorated under the Ottoman Empire. This is one of the contradictions of Kemalists. The Kemalist regime continued the same path like their predecessors in women's rights which began in the Tanzimat period.

While Kemalist discourse asserts that women's suffrage was the original idea of Mustafa Kemal and granted by him later, the official reports of the Grand National Assembly and the activities of the Women's People Party prove that this is another Kemalist distortion. It is true that Mustafa Kemal took a very progressive step in 1930s. However, Assembly debates prove that the suffrage issue was first raised by Huseyin Avni Bey many years before Mustafa Kemal. Besides, Tunali Hilmi Bey raised the issue in the Assembly a second time in 1923. Beyond these parliamentarians the demands of women were uttered by intellectual Ottoman women, such as Halide Edib Hanim and especially Nezihe Muhiddin Hanim. Even though, the Republican People's Party was not established by Mustafa Kemal, Nezihe Muhiddin tried to establish

Women's People Party with her friends in June 1923. While the Kemalist orthodoxy asserts that women's rights were granted by Mustafa Kemal to Turkish women, there was a strong feminist movement beyond the Kemalist regime's aims. Moreover, the Kemalist attitude to this issue was mostly negative in Kemalist press until 1930.

Education is one of the most important means to change the society for the Kemalist modernizers. While Kemalist regime aimed to establish a secular education, the parliamentary debates show that the Kemalist policy was totally different in early 1920s. It was traditionalist - not secular- during the first period of the Turkish Grand National Assembly between 1920 and 1923. When the conservative deputies believed in that not only social life and traditions of the Muslim society should be organized by religion but education also, Kemalist leaders shared the same thought with them. The Assembly debates prove that Kemalists had no radical ideas of secularization of education at that time.

While the dichotomy of the Ottoman educational system was not problem in the first period of the Assembly, the situation changed in the second period. The Kemalists strengthened their power in politics and their attempts to change the educational structure were directly proportional to their power. Ideological changes in education became possible in March 1924, after the Office of Caliphate was abolished. The most important educational reform was the law for the Unification of Education in March 1924. The parliamentary debates indicate that this idea was proposed by some of the conservative deputies before than Kemalists in the first period of the Assembly. While the conservatives advocated a combination of science and religion in a unified school system in 1920, the Kemalist regime rejected this combination after the unification of education became possible in March 1924.

The abolition of madrasas became a fact after the law for the Unification of Education was accepted in the Assembly on March 3, 1924. This abolition was another Kemalist attempt to use the religious institutions in an ideological way. The Assembly debates prove that when Kemalist government was in favor of madrasas and duality in education from 1920 to 1924, Huseyin Avni Bey was totally against them. He emphasized his thought about the division in the educational system very clearly. According to him, the programs of schools were erroneous, and the Darulhilafe Madrasa and the other schools were deficient. The discord of these two different style schools caused many problems. From this perspective, the notion of Huseyin Avni Bey more radically reformist rather than the Kemalist leaders.

During Kemalist modernization, the most drastic measure in the educational and cultural life of Turkey was the adoption of the Latin alphabet in 1928. While the main Kemalist assertion in this reform was the inappropriateness of the Arabic script for authentic Turkish phonology and its difficulties to be learned easily by the Turkish people, this reform was one of the ideological reforms in the early republican era. It is clear that the Kemalist radicalism reached a key milestone in deleting Islamic background from Turkish society in that year. The Kemalist administration was decisive in making a reform in the script in 1928. This was a radical attack to destroy the Islamic heritage of the Turkish society ideologically. After the Law on the Adoption and Implementation of the Turkish Alphabet was passed in the Turkish Grand National Assembly, an educational campaign was started by the Government. The name of the new organization which would be used in the literacy drive was ‘Millet Mektepleri,’ The Schools of the Nation. These schools became the center of Kemalist education. The Kemalist government paid a great importance to these schools. However, for economic reasons, these schools lost their importance in 1929. While Mustafa Kemal was sure about the successes of the language reform in the Turkish society, the

illiteracy problem could not be solved in his period. Assembly debates also prove that the chronic problems in education were not solved because of limited budgets in his period.

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